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GUARDS

HUSSARS AND INFANTRY.

ADVENTURES OF

HARRY AUSTIN.

BY

AN OFFICER.

" Then wild as cloud, or stream, or gale,  
Flow on, flow unconfined, my Tale!"

MARMION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

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# GUARDS HUSSARS AND INFANTRY. ADVENTURES OF HARRY AUSTIN.

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## CHAPTER I.

ON my arrival at Santander, I bent my way to the best *fonda* the place afforded; and, after my long, dusty, and solitary ride, it was, in truth, a luxury when enabled to cast off my travelling garments, and plunge into a baño frio—a refreshment which is not procurable in every town throughout Spain. This finished, and the never failing *olla podrida* having been despatched, I sauntered towards the quay, in the hope of finding some vessel in which I might

have the good fortune to procure a passage for England.

I was approaching the mole, which, at Santander, advances some distance into the sea, when my attention was arrested by hearing a considerable noise, or rather clamour, of human voices, working away, at the highest pitch of their lungs, in a confused mass of English and Spanish. Never doubting but that some of my countrymen had, as usual, fallen into a dilemma, probably through ignorance either of the language, or the prejudices, of the natives, I turned from my course, and hastened, with my best speed, towards the scene of action.

On reaching a small *posada*, the appearance of which did not hold forth much promise of “good entertainment for man and beast,” I beheld, towering amid the centre of a small crowd of Spaniards, the thin, gaunt figure of a British officer, who, as if anxious to enforce the pungency of his unintelligible language

upon the audience, moved his long red arms to and fro, as if endeavouring to sweep the cob-webs from the skies. Fiercely he stamped, and loudly he swore, and, at last, worked himself up to such a pitch of fury that, seizing his nearest tormentor by the red sash, I know not to what part of the town he might have hurled him, had I not interfered.

“Can I be of any service?” I exclaimed, elbowing my way through the now excited crowd. “What do all these fellows want?”

“Ah! what, indeed, sir,” he replied; but no sooner had our eyes met than both our visages pourtrayed considerable astonishment: — the gentleman in the mob, however, was the first to break silence.

“Didn’t you die in a hospital?” he enquired, staring at me with widely-extended eyes, as if not quite convinced as to my identity—“I thought you were buried at Vittoria!”

“And I thought you were hung at Deal!” was my answer—for the individual before me

was neither more nor less than the gallant Captain whom we had left suspended as a sign over the hall door of the Golden Fleece.

“So I was, sir,” was his angry reply; “and, with your permission, we’ll settle that little affair presently.”

“As you will,” I rejoined; “but don’t you think you had better dispose of the case on hand first?” For, from the exclamations of all around, I was convinced that the long Captain’s annoyance arose from ignorance of the language; and that, unless some one came to his aid, he stood a fair chance of making his appearance before the principal *magistrado* in the city.

“Egad, sir, you ’re not wrong there,” answered the long figure, already under the influence of some potent beverage. “Let me get out of this business, and then we can ‘fetch up our roster,’ as Sergeant Hinde says; but to be so infernally insulted by such a damned set of scoundrels as these is not to be borne,

sir; and, by the God of War, sir, they shall rue it."

"If you will put me in possession of the circumstances," I replied, "probably I may be enabled to help you."

"Sir, you 're a gentleman, barring the Deal affair, of which more hereafter," answered the Captain, "and most readily will I inform you of the state of the case, and the cause of the dilapidation of that animal's proboscis;" and he pointed to the landlord of the dwelling, who appeared in scarcely a better plight than did the knight of the napkin whose face, it may be remembered, this same hero converted into a broken glass store.

"You must know, sir," he commenced, "that hardly half an hour has elapsed since I first set foot in the town, and, having been directed to this pot-house of an inn by some interested rascal, I entered the house and called for dinner. Instead of attending to my wishes, that sallow-faced thief, with the broken head

thrust a long thing like a play-bill in my hand, saying, ‘Liston sings in the comedy.’

“What’s that to me, you brute?” said I, “bring me some dinner.

“‘Liston sings in the comedy,’ he again repeated. — ‘Curse Liston, and you, too;’ I responded, loosing a little of my usual equanimity of temper, ‘I’m not going to the play, and if I were, I don’t believe a word about Liston’s being here—so, no more of your tricks, old fellow, but bring me some dinner.’

“‘Liston sings in the comedy,’ again he twangled out in his bad, broken English, ‘Liston sings in the comedy.’

“‘By all that’s holy,’ I replied, ‘if you bother me any more about your cursed theatre, I’ll break your black sconce for you;’ and, for fear there might be any difference of understanding between us, on account of language, I set my teeth wagging like a woman’s tongue when abusing her friends, and, to make my desires the more manifest, I pointed to that

part of my body where I discerned the greatest vacuum.

“‘ Ha ! ha !’ he immediately exclaimed, as if only just coming to his senses, ‘ soap—soap.’

“‘ Soap, you wretch ;’ muttered I, ‘ what the devil do you mean by soap ?’ for I saw, pretty plainly, he wanted to sell me a bargain, so I just took the liberty of elevating my stick, to let him know what he might expect if he went farther. No sooner, however, did he perceive my intention than, quite forgetting the imminent peril in which he stood, he commenced his abuse in no measured strain, calling me a ‘ gallows ostrich,’ alluding, I presume, to my height, ‘ an ass,’ and, the Lord knows what else he would have added, had I not taken him into my own hands, and stopped his harangue ; upon which, he roared and bellowed like a bull —calling out ten thousand times for his ‘ mother —mother—mother,’ until all these people assembled ; but, I suppose his mother has not come yet, for he still keeps slobbering like a bab—by.

“‘Liston sings in the comedy,’ thought I, ‘soap,’ a ‘gallows ostrich,’ an ‘ass,’ and his mother,’ there must be some considerable mistake;” and so I told the red man, but he firmly adhered to his statement, so I was fain to have recourse to the landlord for an explanation: but so irritated was the Spaniard that it was with considerable difficulty and persuasion that I enticed him to elucidate the case.

By his account it appeared that the gallant Captain, having entered his house, called loudly for dinner, which, being a demand productive of benefit to the purveyor when complied with, the Spaniard had learned the full meaning of, accordingly producing the bill of fare, he accosted the son of Mars with the usual intimation of “*La lista, Señor, de la comeda,*” which the matter of fact Englishmen, aided by his previous potations, concluded was a statement, in broken English, signifying that Liston sings in the comedy, while the bill of fare might have been a bill of costs, a bill of the play, or,

in fact, any other bill than a bank post-bill, for all he could tell to the contrary ; and when mine host commenced an enumeration of the varieties with which his kitchen abounded, beginning with *sopa gallinaostras*, and *asado*, the learned warrior found no difficulty in discovering that he had been offered soap for a meal, and afterwards abused in the language before stated. His rage excited, his wrath found vent in blows, whereupon the wretched furnisher of feasts calling loudly for his “*mozo*,” or waiter, which in Spanish is pronounced “*motho*,” gained credit for uttering the most heart-rending vociferations for his mother.

Thus was furnished one instance out of many, where my countrymen, with their accustomed impatience, thrust themselves into difficulties in a foreign country, in which they frequently experienced much trouble, and sometimes even danger, before they could be extricated from the dilemma.

The price the landlord fixed on his own head,

amounted to a couple of doubloons, which having been extracted from the long soldier's purse, he requested permission to accompany me to the *fonda* where I had put up, to which, of course, I willingly acceded, and we amicably walked away together. Whether the gallant Captain forgot, in the excitement of his recent fracas, all recollection of the Golden Fleece ; or whether he judged the aid I had just afforded him as sufficient reparation for my crime, is better known to himself than to me, for notwithstanding his threat of " bringing up the roster," according to Sergeant Hinde's phraseology, not one word on the subject ever passed his lips, at least, in my presence ; nor did he even advert in one instance to anything connected with the exploit.

On re-entering the hotel, we found a large assemblage of persons of all descriptions congregated in the coffee-room, naval and military officers, of the latter many returning home wounded and exhausted in frame, while others,

fresh from England, were rejoicing in all gaiety and spirits on their way to join Lord Wellington. Spaniards of every sort and profession mingled with the throng, and discussion regarding the past, and speculations touching the future, with frequent references and lengthened quotations from the various newspapers strewed around, announced the unsettled period of the times, and the anxiety of all for the results.

I had already met one former acquaintance since my arrival at Santander, and I was now destined to stumble on a friend, for, on entering the room, the sound of a well-known voice drew my attention to a group of young English officers, seated in a corner of the apartment, among whom was Charley Villiers. From the healthy and happy countenances of the party, and, moreover, from the good and uniform garments in which they were arrayed—no bad criterion to judge by in those days—they were evidently a fresh importation from home, while the toil-worn and sun-burnt visages of three

shattered old officers who sat near them—all of whom were bandaged and limping, and in two instances curtailed of their fair proportions—formed a most striking contrast.

“Villiers, my old friend,” I exclaimed, advancing to the table whereon was deposited what remained of their cold collation. “I’m more than delighted to see you,” and, extending my hand, felt something like chagrin at finding my advances so coolly received, but immediately remembering the period which had elapsed since our meeting, and the havoc that wounds and suffering had effected on my appearance, I concluded he did not recognize my person.

“Don’t you remember your old Eton friend, Austin?” I added, though not perhaps in quite so confident a tone. “*Don’t* you recollect me, Villiers, or won’t you recollect me?” and, highly sensitive at the unprovoked, and, as I thought, premeditated, insult, I looked round the table with no very amicable expression, hoping to fix on some other acquaintance to whom I might

apply the same questions. There was but one other whom I had seen before, and he seemed as little inclined to recognize me as his friend.

Indignant beyond measure, at such uncalled-for insolence, I thought Villiers's aversion to hackney-coaches had reverted into a hatred to mortals, and, determined to show *him* that it *was* possible to exist without the halo of his countenance, I continued: "As it appears beyond the summit of your ability to recal your remembrance to so far back a period, I beg to apologize to the rest of the party for my intrusion; and, as short memories seem to be the last imported novelty from home, I shall be careful, as regards yourself, strictly to adhere to the fashion." And so saying, I turned my back on the table, and walked towards my long friend in red.

"Stop, Austin — Austin, stop, old fellow, stop," and jumping up from his seat with an energy that upset the uniformity of the waiter's arrangements, Charley Villiers, grasping my hand

led me back to his brother-officers. “Don’t be offended, Austin, on my honour nothing could be farther from my wish, or thoughts, than to give you one moment’s uneasiness, and as for insulting you—oh, nonsense! what should I want to insult you for? No! no! friends, and old ones especially, are not so plentiful. And, I flatter myself, I’ve grown a degree or two wiser since the hackney-coach affair at Hatchett’s.”

“I’m delighted Villiers,” was my answer, “to find myself mistaken in what I thought was excessive unkindness on your part; and, now that I am undeceived, I most willingly, and in truth, apologize; but why did you and your friends stare at me, as if you had seen a ghost?”

“You’ve hit it exactly, Austin,” he replied. “The reason your reception among us was so inhospitable was precisely because we were not thoroughly convinced that we did *not* see a ghost; for never again did I expect to behold you on this side the grave. You were reported as having died in the hospital at Vittoria.”

"Reported! in what?" I inquired.

"The papers—all the papers," answered the whole party.

"And the *Gazette*," I added, eagerly: "was I reported dead in the *Gazette*?"

"To be sure you were—why, didn't you know it?"

"No,"—continued I, "how should I? Shut up for months in a cursed hospital at Vittoria, and only able to crawl about during the last four or five weeks, without receiving a letter, and equally debarred, from the state of the country and the army having entered France, from sending any, how is it possible I could know what was going on?" And now commenced those series of blessings, hurled at the distant head of the pallid-faced Cornet, which, with short intermissions, I continued to shower upon him for many a long day afterwards.

Seeing how much annoyed I felt at this unlooked-for intelligence, Charley Villiers took me aside, and, during the evening, I learnt that my

death from wounds received in action having been reported by the surgeons of the hospital at head-quarters, it was in course of time forwarded to England; and thus had my name figured in the Gazette as “severely wounded—since dead;” while, at the time, I was fully able to have read the awful statement, provided I had been furnished with the document to peruse from. The consequences were evident—my place in the regiment had been filled up—my mother had been installed into my property—my kind old uncle and my lovely cousin Mary were in mourning—and last, not least, the bills which I had drawn at Vittoria would, when presented, be dishonoured under the supposition of my decease prior to the date. And all this accumulation of evil was the result of the practical jokes of the white-faced gentleman.

How could I possibly tell but that the whole of my property, having reverted to my mother, might already have found its way into the possession of Sir Frederick Distowe; nor was there

any one to object to the measure, provided she was willing to acquiesce in his wishes ; for I well knew endless persecution would be the result of her refusal. My old friend Jephson, conceiving me dead, would no longer feel called upon to interfere in the matter, and, unless I could cause my re-instatement in the service, I should be wholly and irretrievably ruined. And how to meet the bills which I had drawn I knew not — they were not large in amount, it is true—but had they been even one fourth less, where was the money to pay them ? I had only about the value of fifty pounds sterling in my possession ; so, stepping on board the vessel which was to carry me to that much-loved—long-sighed for—home, I knew it was more than probable that, when I set my foot upon my native shore, I should have returned to England—a beggar.

## CHAPTER II.

“BLESS me!” exclaimed old Turner, as I entered the coffee-room at Stevens’s, “now, who’d have thought it? Mr. Austin! oh, Lord, sir, we all heard as you was dead!” and the rotund figure of the waiter, bearing in his arms a large tureen approximating in shape to his own, and filled, as probably he was himself, with rich turtle soup—stood, as if rooted to the spot, in the middle of the room—“I’m quite delighted, ’pon my word I am, Mr. Austin, to find it’s all a mistake; we’ve had many gentlemen here enquiring for you, till they put your name in the papers, and then, of course, they know’d it was no good coming here to ask questions.

Well, now, really, I *am* glad, Mr. Austin ;” and the rosy countenance of the honest old waiter bore ample testimony to the veracity of his words.

Such was the purport of the primary address of each person I encountered ; and so determined were they all that I *had* died, or if not, that, in accordance with the desire of the Gazette, I ought to have died, that I began to doubt the propriety of having ever recovered. But, before proceeding homeward to delight Sir Frederick Distowe with ocular demonstration of my existence, it was absolutely necessary that I should ascertain, at the Horse Guards, the circumstances connected with my decease, and also enquire at the Agents’ respecting the bills which I had drawn at Vittoria on their house, and for which I had received the value ; and, concluding my business might be finished in two or three hours, I postponed writing to my friends, it being my intention to leave London by the next night’s mail.

The following morning, I proceeded to Craig's-court; and, walking direct to the office where the business of our regiment was conducted, found a stranger occupying the elevated chair, from which he commanded a view of the pecuniary accounts of more than two-thirds of the cavalry in the service.

"I should be glad," I commenced, addressing him, "if you could tell me the state of Mr. Austin's account."

"Mr. Austin?" interrogated the exalted arithmetician, "certainly, sir; what regiment?"

"The —th Hussars," I replied.

"The —th Hussars?" echoed my companion, turning over the ledger—"Austin—A—Austin—ha, here it is, sir; Lieutenant Harry Austin—page 743—743—debtor and creditor; all right, sir, as you will perceive; and, running his finger down the column, brought it to a dead pause, near the bottom; when I read, not much to my satisfaction, the following note: "Lieutenant Harry Austin, —th Hussars, died

in hospital, of wounds received at Vittoria, Sep. 2, 1813. Balance credit brought down, £643. 10. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ., handed over to Messrs. Coutts & Co., to the credit of Sir Frederick Distowe, by advice from Lady Distowe, with concurrence of legal opinion."

Here was an agreeable piece of information — six hundred and forty three pounds odd of my money placed to the credit of Sir Frederick Distowe ; little probability, therefore, existed of recovering that sum ; and, most disagreeable anticipations respecting Selby obtruded themselves most forcibly on my notice. But to remain arguing with the clerk could be only to waste time to little purpose ; therefore, sending up my card to any one of the partners who might happen to be in the house, I speedily made him acquainted with my case ; but, never having seen this gentleman before, during the course of my existence, and, owing to his being equally circumscribed in his acquaintance with myself, it is not to be wondered at that he

received my information with well-bred civility, yet without evincing any extraordinary warmth in my cause. In point of fact, there were at this time so many bare-faced attempts at imposition practised, particularly on the army agents, by persons claiming the property of others, that I could not blame the individual before me for receiving my statement with extreme caution, bordering on suspicion. I ran over the names of the officers of the regiment, to convince him of my identity. But might I not have acquired that information, in common with any person accustomed to peruse the Army List? could I not refer to my lawyer, or banker? But, alas! the kind-hearted Jephson was far away; and my only bankers in London were my agents—and if I could not procure money, what was to become of my bills? I should have my name scouted through Spain as a swindler; and those who had trusted me would lose their money, and their confidence in the integrity of my countrymen. This it

was that annoyed me more than all—but I needed not to trouble myself with useless conjectures, as I was speedily informed that the bills in question had been presented, and dishonoured, the holders being told that the drawer must undoubtedly have been a fictitious character, since the person whose name he had used had been dead upwards of two months. Oh! how I cursed the Cornet, and all practical jokers; for now, through his absurd foolery, was I not only deprived of my money and my commission, and my own existence doubted, but, moreover, my name branded by the dishonoured bills, as a swindler and an impostor.

Somewhat moved at my evident distress, which the agent seemed to consider as too well enacted to be feigned, he advised my immediate adjournment to the Horse Guards; and, as fortunately it was one of the Duke of York's levee days, he proposed my instantly adding my name to His Royal Highness's list.

Thanking him for the information, I was leaving the room, when my departure was momentarily obstructed by the entrance of a person by the same door as that which I had fixed on for my exit ; and, to my great joy, I recognised the face of an old Eton friend who, instantly remembering me, gave that cordial shake of the hand and kind salutation, with which Eton, as though by a sort of masonic signal, generally caused her votaries to greet one another.

Fortunately for me, this gentleman was most intimately acquainted with the person with whom I had been conversing, and, on his vouching for my identity, I received so many apologies for his apparent doubt of my existence that it was impossible to say any thing on the subject ; and now that he was certain who I was, he very handsomely offered what pecuniary assistance I might desire ; but, as I did not feel myself justified in requesting so large a loan as would have met the bills before

alluded to, I thought it better to postpone taking the advantage of the offer, until after my attendance at the Levee. Having taken leave of my old, and also of my newly created, friend, I found myself in what is well known to all military men as the waiting - room at the Horse Guards.

It is not necessary for a man to be deeply versed in the study of the ‘human face divine’ in order to trace out the various workings within the breasts of the assembled forty or fifty officers, all waiting for the summons to enter the presence of the Commander-in-chief. In truth, I have often thought it might afford a splendid study for the easel of any one who made the many expressions of which the countenance is capable his peculiar object of attention.

When I entered, there were about five-and-forty persons, of all sizes and of all ages, assembled in as uncomfortably unfurnished a large room as can well be imagined. One or two book-cases carefully closed and containing divers

dusty old volumes—probably William the Conqueror's disembarkation—returns or copies of Prince Edward's squad books, for aught I or any of the levee attendants knew to the contrary—stood upright and as immoveable, against the wall, as did the two mounted Life-guardsmen in their boxes below; while an old map reclining against the same support, and half a dozen antique leather-bottomed chairs, were the only insensible occupants of the apartment. There is a sort of halo of mystery and awe pervading the building that apparently affects all who approach within its influence—the steep, broad, cold steps which lead to the unfurnished, extensive apartments, garnished with the ponderous records of armies and individuals, who have long ceased to exist—the dead silence which reigns around, save where the echo of your own footsteps, or the low voice of a messenger, is heard in conference with an orderly serjeant of the Foot-guards, or the corporal of Hussars, when delivering the despatches to their

keeping—all tend to create a sensation easily experienced, but difficult to define—while, ever and anon, a distant bell strikes upon the ear—the reverberating sound of a closing door traverses the building, and a solitary being is seen to wend his way from out this enchanted spot, his term of audience having expired. And then the marvellously constructed objects which are here and there to be discovered, and in which we are told reposed the honourable weight of divers general officers when anxiously waiting for despatches during many a long night of the last war—which said cumbrous articles much more resemble instruments of torture than of ease. The very boxes in which the letters are despatched, from the bottom to the top of the mansion, appear imbued with an aristocratic air; and all that is required to render the building any thing rather than an abode of comfort may be found in the grave, important countenances of the various clerks, messengers, and deputy - assistant - deputies who noiselessly

wander down the dreary passages—appearing and disappearing through doors which, to the uninitiated, are invisible like so many gloomy familiars of the inquisition.

In the waiting-room may be seen the General Officer walking up and down the apartment, with an air of superiority, and occasionally speaking to some one, if any be there with whom he is acquainted, in rather a louder tone than is indulged in by his less fortunate brethren in arms. When the door opens to summon the person whose name stands next on the list, he boldly advances to the breach, as if confident of being called; and when at length his name is announced, with a patronizing half bow distributed among the still expectants, he passes the portal which divides the besiegers from the besieged. This officer is confident of his reception—he comes to ask no favour, but simply to pay his periodical respects. His is merely a visit of ceremony, and as such it is soon and satisfactorily ended for both parties. Not so

the next, an old and grey-headed man, whose appearance indicated military rank, as exalted as that of his predecessor ; but, alas ! the list on the table pronounced him but a Captain on half-pay. Worn out with wounds and suffering, he had long since been compelled to relinquish his struggle against the enemies of his country, and to exert all his energies in the battle against that great and almost resistless crime—poverty. All his little wealth, and the whole of his thoughts, had been employed in bringing up his only child in a way such as to render him a worthy servant of God and his King. And now the old man came forth from his seclusion to request a commission for the boy whom he thus nobly offered,—as his sole and dearest treasure,—in defence of his monarch and the glorious constitution of his country, with nothing but the prospect of such remuneration as he himself offered a living example of in his own person. I know not if he succeeded or otherwise, in his application ; but if the thing was feasible, and

possible of attainment, he could not have relied with more certainty of success than on the exertions of that kind and benevolent Prince, whose unwearied labours brought the army in a short period to an almost miraculous state of discipline and comfort, and at the same time corrected a mass of overgrown abuses which, in spite of the opposition offered, were wrestled with and conquered by a man whose memory the army must ever revere.

There were many others ‘biding their time’ in that apartment; but to give a lengthened detail of the various causes which attracted each of them to that one focus, would be to recapitulate real and imaginary evils without end. My readers will doubtless be satisfied on being informed that, among others, might be discerned the self-satisfied countenances of some young officers come to return thanks for promotion received. The eager enquiring gaze of others, anxious to know when their patronymics would appear in the gazette—thus affording to the

world the edifying knowledge that they had progressed one more, and perhaps the last, step, up the ladder of military elevation. The discontented and restless glance of others betokened their dissatisfied minds brooding over many an instance of supposititious neglect—these could point out, to a nicety, the names of all who may have passed over their heads, without, as they affirmed, having any claim whatever to promotion. That young officer gazing so earnestly into the street, unconscious of any single occurrence there passing, has just returned from abroad, where, owing to some unfortunate occurrence, his case had been deemed of sufficient importance for the highest investigation. He is muttering words to himself, possibly a speech, wherewith to commence his apology in extenuation of his fault, the moment he appears in the presence of the Duke—but of which speech, though mentally repeated more than a dozen times, in all probability, he will not utter a syllable when the period has arrived for its

delivery. Some seemed in high spirits—others appeared the very reverse—but the whole were restless, and fidgetting about the room, continually casting an anxious gaze towards the periodically opened door. And altogether the *tout ensemble* of the group strongly reminded me of a set of miserable mortals of whom I once made one of the party in Cartwright's parlour, each awaiting his turn of suffering, under the experienced hands of that celebrated dentist.

I was laughing in my sleeve at this whimsical conceit, when I was startled by a clear, though low, official voice, exclaiming “Lieutenant Austin!” and, following the blue-coated, brass buttoned messenger, I was handed to the aide-de-camp in waiting, by whom again I was propelled towards a door, through which an entrance was instantly afforded—I heard the portal close behind me, and I stood alone, in presence of the Commander-in-chief.

The good-humoured expression of the Duke

of York's countenance, which was equalled only by the benevolence of his heart, cannot be forgotten by any who had once enjoyed the honour of an interview with him. In the present instance, having previously made himself acquainted with my case (which he invariably did by reference, prior to the interview), His Royal Highness's manner was particularly kind, I had almost said cordial. The room in which the Duke stood was slightly better furnished than the others which I had seen, while a broad writing-table, let in with green baize, and covered with divers papers and books, was fixed before him.

"You have just returned from Vittoria, Mr. Austin, I understand," commenced His Royal Highness; to which, of course, I bowed assent. "I am afraid," he continued, "that, owing to some unaccountable mistake, we have used you rather badly, but it shall be my care to see the evil remedied. Can you throw any light on the subject, or in any way account for

your having been returned as dead?" and here the Duke handed me a beautifully written document, where, among the names of many others who had departed this life, I found my own comfortably enrolled, having a Captain of the 87th as a *compagnon de voyage* on my right, while a Cornet of the 14th Light Dragoons kindly supported me on the left.

Now, as those of my readers who have taken the trouble of journeying thus far into my history are tolerably well aware, I could, if it had so pleased me, have communicated to His Royal Highness something resembling a shrewd suspicion as to how the mistake in question came to pass; but, as it was impossible to have divulged so far without implicating the pallid youth, I was bound to pretend ignorance.

I was then desired to detail the circumstances attendant on receiving my wound—my treatment in the hospital—the day of the month of my dismissal therefrom; and, in short, all the circumstances connected with my sojourn in

that horrible place, together with my recovery and return home—of all which the Duke took notes in his own hand-writing ; and, having rung his bell, the summons was promptly answered.

“I wish to know,” said the Duke to the officer, on entering the room, “the circumstances connected with the report of Lieutenant Austin’s death, of the —th Hussars, stated to have occurred in hospital at Vittoria ?” and, in an almost incredibly short space of time, the full information amounted to this :

From the hospital my supposed death had been reported to the head of the Medical Staff, whence the information was conveyed home, and likewise to my regiment, from which latter it was again despatched to the Horse Guards, and also to the Secretary at War : thus, though coming through so many channels, the cause of the error originated in the unavoidable mistake of the hospital mates, owing to the accursed propensity of the white-faced Cornet. The

supposed vacancy had been immediately filled up, and, by the autograph alterations in the annual Army List placed before me, I found that the Lieutenant next in rotation to myself had, by the last packet, succeeded to his troop, which little circumstance I took the liberty of pointing out—adding that, had I not been so unceremoniously disposed of, the promotion would have fallen to my lot.

“Very true, Mr. Austin,” replied the Duke, laughing, “the troop would certainly have been yours; but, as I before said, you shall not suffer through the mistake; go to your friends, who, doubtless, must be anxious to see you; and hold yourself in readiness for a second and speedy summons to rejoin the army.” And, ringing the bell, the aid-de-camp in waiting again appeared—I was bowed and bowed to the door, the portal again shut, and I formed another of those silent, solitary beings, winding his way down the cold broad staircase, whom I had before amused myself in watching.

My thoughts partook not of the most exhilarating description, as I slowly bent my steps towards Bond-street; and, although my professional chances had considerably brightened, to what they had been prior to my audience with the Duke, there still remained sufficient of doubt and uncertainty, regarding my private affairs, to cast a thick gloom of despondency over my future prospects. But what most annoyed me were the bills which had been protested, and which, of course, I was bound in honour to have paid; therefore, changing the direction in which I had been walking, I again entered Craig's court; and, having made myself acquainted with the name of the house from which the bills in question had been presented, I immediately despatched a letter avowing myself the drawer of the same—stated the unfortunate mistake which had caused my funds to be turned over to another person's credit, and finally declared my willingness and anxiety to meet the demand, provided they would hold

the papers over for a short time, so as to enable me to obtain the amount requisite for discharging the obligation.

Had my request been refused, and had they pressed hard for full and immediate payment, I know not what steps I could have taken to avoid incarceration ; but, so far from adopting such a mode of proceeding, I received a particularly polite reply, expressing their satisfaction at not being compelled to return the bills to their correspondents at Vittoria, and concluding that, under the circumstances of the case, they were fully aware difficulties must arise, which it would require time to obviate, and therefore begged I would refund the money when convenient to myself, but not before.

Such conduct was as unexpected by me as it was handsome of them, and the very circumstance of the answer having been couched in such courteous language added a fresh inducement to my exerting every nerve to cancel the debt ; but that was far easier to determine on than to accomplish.

The fifty pounds with which I embarked at Santander was fast drawing to a close, and to apply to my mother I was well convinced would be futile, since every guinea which could, by possibility, be collected in her name, invariably and without loss of time found its way into the possession of Sir Frederick. To my old Guadaloupe uncle I was equally resolved not to appeal; for, to confess the truth, I felt considerably piqued and annoyed at not having once received a line or syllable from him or Mary since I sailed from Deal; and if, thought I, my relations care so little for my welfare as not to send even one letter of enquiry during the many months of my absence, surely it would be impossible so far to bend my pride as to sue for a pecuniary loan, to be niggardly complied with, or possibly refused. The idea was as instantly rejected as formed; but I felt certain there must be ways and means of obtaining money in London, particularly when the borrower could prove his full power of exercising

controul over both principal and interest of a very considerable property, on his coming of age.

Full of these ruminations, I entered Stevens', and, almost unconsciously taking up the Morning Post which lay on the coffee-room table, one of the first advertisements that met my eye was couched in the following terms :

“ From £3000 to £80,000 to lend.

“ Noblemen and gentlemen can get their bills and promissory notes discounted to the above amount on the most moderate terms, by application—if by letter, post paid — to X. Y. Z. No. 202, Doyle Street, Bloomsbury, between the hours of 12 and 2, every day, Sunday excepted.”

To X. Y. Z. No. 202, Doyle Street, Bloomsbury, I accordingly determined to proceed forthwith ; but, finding by the clock that the mine of wealth must have closed its golden jaws, by the hour the hands pointed to, I was reluctantly compelled to postpone my visit until the follow-

ing day, in consequence whereof, my determination of leaving town that night was frustrated, but on the following it was my fixed intention to start, if by any mode I could procure the means of taking up the obnoxious bills.

A solitary meal in an almost empty coffee-room, when by the few persons present you are unknowing and unknown, is as unsociable and unpleasant a position as almost any in which a man may chance to find himself, nevertheless it is *one* with which most gentlemen are more or less conversant. I was existing under these most delectable circumstances, on the evening of the day of the Duke's levee, and pondering over in my mind what sum it would be advisable to borrow of that most accommodating person, X. Y. Z., when the handsome Captain of Lancers, of whose spaniels honourable mention has already been made, entered the room.

"Who is that at the far end of the apartment?" I heard him inquire of the waiter, in a low tone.

"Mr. Austin, of the—th Hussars, sir," was the reply.

"The devil," said the Captain, "I thought he was dead!"

"So did I, sir," responded the plate-wiper.

"Has he just returned from abroad?" earnestly continued the interrogater; and, having been answered in the affirmative, the waiter approached, bearing Captain Daillie's compliments, who being extremely anxious to gain some authentic information respecting his cousin in the same regiment as myself, begged permission to introduce himself; to which request I could not do otherwise than accede; and the gallant Captain glided into a chair, at the opposite side of my table.

## CHAPTER III.

AMONG other strange peculiarities in which the gallant Captain delighted, was the singular propensity of making himself appear, both in dress and manners, as effeminate a specimen of the human race as it was possible with the aid of curls, lisping, and eccentricities, to accomplish ; and being so extremely handsome, and in every manly exercise the very reverse of that which it was his aim to be taken for, it would be difficult to account for his most singular *pénchant*. But such was the case, and those who were unacquainted with his character, and merely met him on a casual occasion, would never imagine that a being who appeared hardly

capable of dragging his elaborately dressed figure across the room, and whose dark, scented curls, descending down each side of his face, and shading his back, in imitation of the costume so much admired in the days of Charles the Second, could be the same individual who, at Brighton, on being taxed with effeminacy, volunteered, and actually did fight two ferocious bull dogs, on his hands and knees ; and, by his great strength, presence of mind, and activity, cowed the savage brutes, and was unanimously pronounced victor in the combat.

Like many other “men about town,” my new acquaintance was thought, or supposed to be, the very reverse of “being in the enjoyment of affluent ease ;” but what his system might have been, or how he contrived to keep up the appearance which he maintained, was known to himself only ; but indisputably he lived as well, and kept as good horses and vehicles, as any man of acknowledged and accredited good income ; and, further, I never met the individual

in question, even long after his quitting the army, that he did not invariably ask me to his house, offered his horses, and expatiated on the contents of his cellar, let the time, place, or county, where we chanced to meet, be where it might.

On the present occasion, he was in high spirits, having accomplished, what he termed, a piece of good-luck, and which, prior to our parting, I was made acquainted with.

After satisfying his queries, as regarded his cousin, to the best of my ability, not having, as it may be remembered, seen any of the regiment subsequent to Vittoria, the conversation turned on various subjects ; and, among others, the Captain did not fail, in common with every one whom it has been my fortune to encounter, to assure me that he conceived it most unaccountable that I was not reposing some hundred of miles distant, with between three and four feet of our mother earth, for a counterpane, thereby proving himself no exception to the general

rule ; for, invariably, the first exclamation addressed, whenever I came in contact with an old familiar face, was the unvarying, ceaseless cry, “Why, I thought you were dead !” Till at length the equanimity of my temper might have been much doubted from the tenor of my brief replies : indeed I had little reason for remembering with pleasure the source from which originated the cause of my acquaintances’ mistake ; and, again and again, I wished the pallid officer had made any one, rather than myself, a butt whereon to practise his jokes.

“I only arrived in town this morning,” said Captain Daillie, as if deeming an apology for appearing there in the month of December absolutely necessary, “nor should I have come up at all, if it had not been owing to unavoidable business which could not have been postponed, and, disagreeable as it is, we all know business must be attended to. But allow me to ask, do you stay long in London ?”

“I am afraid,” was my reply, “that much

depends upon the facility with which I may be enabled to replenish my consumptive purse; for, not having been aware of my own decease which, however, seems to have been pretty well circulated at home, I passed bills at Vittoria, which I now find a difficulty in meeting, since, on the report of my dissolution, others stepped forward to claim money which I had, in my own mind, dedicated to far different purposes."

"Have you applied to any of your friends?" inquired the Captain.

"No, neither do I intend to do so," was my reply; "reasons, which it would be irrelevant to state here, and which cannot signify to others, preclude the possibility of any attempt being made in that quarter. In fact I do not feel confident that they would assist me, even were I to solicit their interference."

"That's precisely my case," interrupted the officer, "excepting where *you* doubt, *I* am certain: for instance," he added, laughing and filling his glass, "I am fully convinced that *my*

friends would most unequivocally decline the honour ; and what makes me most positive on this head is because I have already tried them — aye tried, sir, and found ‘them wanting ;’ but our cases, I imagine, present few features of even remote similarity. Your reasons, which of course it is neither my wish nor desire to pry into, must, I should conclude, be far different from mine. But, like the uncivilized traveller in Hadji Baba, who continued pulling the bell-rope until the waiters were tired of answering the summons, I have so perseveringly recalled the fact of my existence to the recollection of my relatives that they now receive confirmation of it with the greatest unconcern imaginable : but to the point—if my knowledge of the ways and by-ways of this little village can in any way be of service, I hope you will consider me as a friend, and, if it be not an impertinent question, I would enquire what steps you now purpose taking ?”

“There,” I replied, “is the difficulty, at least,

so I thought this morning, since which time, I have found an advertisement in the papers, by which I discover there will be small trouble in borrowing any sum I please; and had it not been too late to proceed to the place pointed out, when I was first made acquainted with the paragraph, I should have been there long since; but, as it is, I must defer my visit until to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," replied my friend, "I am in truth delighted at having thus met you, prior to your thrusting yourself into the lion's mouth; for allow me to observe, without meaning the slightest offence, that, by your apparent confidence in this newspaper statement, you betray considerable ignorance touching the ways and means of what, in parliamentary phraseology, is termed 'raising the supplies,' for I may take upon myself to affirm that the projector of the advertisement cannot boast the possession of a five pound note."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed: "then what motive

can he possibly have in issuing such an invitation?" For why a man should voluntarily offer to lend money, without having any in his possession to produce—the more so, since there was not any earthly occasion for such a proffer of assistance, puzzled me not a little.

"Oh, that's very easily explained," was the answer: "all he wants is to get bills of your's, or of any person's who will evince the egregious folly of trusting him, into his own possession, on pretence of getting them cashed for the benefit of the acceptor; and so he does get them cashed, but the money never passes beyond his fingers, and the poor dupe hears no further regarding his 'flying kites,' until, at the expiration of their limited existence, they are presented for payment: thus he is compelled to meet his own own drafts, and for which he never received a farthing. Oh, my dear fellow, that trick's as old as a radical's honesty, in fact so very antique it is that by this time I fancied it had entirely worn out. The system wont do, but if you'll

take my advice, I can put you in a far surer, and considerably cheaper, mode of obtaining what you want."

"Can you?" I exclaimed. "I shall consider myself beyond measure obliged—but what is the plan you propose?"

"Simply," was the reply, "not to borrow at all. I am certain the sum you want can easily be procured by making application in the proper quarter—and even though you may have had some small, or—excuse me—perhaps imaginary, difference with your connections, why not apply to your lawyer at once, who will of course readily advance whatever amount you may require, at far less interest than can be expected from usurers? Take my advice on this point, Mr. Austin, and you'll find it by far the best that can be given—I well know what these people are, and am no novice to the almost impossibility of escaping from their clutches, when once their abominable toils surround you. In short, in one way or another, and under various pretences,

they make you pay annually, as interest, very nearly the actual amount which you have received in ready money, and yet the original grand debt remains as undiminished as ever. What I say is from actual experience, and bought, moreover, at no inconsiderable cost; and had I the good luck to see my name expunged from various parchments and papers except bonds, bills, and annuities, it would go hard with Jack Daillie if ever the ink of a money scrivener was employed in inserting his name in those ledgers again: I recommend you, at all events, to think over the matter, or probably, in a few years, you may find your pocket as empty as at present is this bottle;" he continued, holding the magnum to the light of the candles, "and, possibly, without the means of replenishing the one as easily as we can refill the other—Here—Turner—more claret." And, having thus giving me his opinion, my experienced friend seemed to consider his office of mentor as ended; and, on the production of the

wine, quietly asked what course I chose to steer?

"I have already told you," was my answer, "that I cannot and will not apply to my friends; and as respects my lawyer, too much time must necessarily be consumed between this and the period of his producing the money, even should I choose to appeal to that quarter; but I see no reason why I should subject myself to the annoyance of labouring under an obligation, when it can so easily be avoided merely at a small pecuniary sacrifice. In short, the money I must have—I cannot adopt your recommendation, but will obtain it here and forthwith, therefore if—as I before said—you will oblige me with the advantage of any knowledge you may possess, which may expedite the object I have in view, I shall feel considerably grateful. If, on the contrary, you think fit to decline, why, I must have recourse to my friend X. Y. Z. of advertising notoriety."

"As you will," calmly replied the Captain, replenishing his glass, "it is not much in my

way going about town offering advice, and holding up scarecrows to frighten novices from destruction: but, I suppose, I must have been in something of a sentimental mood this evening, or I should not have troubled you so far as to have taxed your patience with a repetition of my discoveries—but I have merely told you of that which I *know*, and, of course, it is for you to profit thereby, or not, just as you please—I've done."

"Not the claret, I hope—nor your advice as to the best way of my getting the money?" I enquired laughing.

"Oh no," he replied, "far from it, every man is, at all events, supposed to know his own affairs best, so I shall cease endeavouring to dissuade you from your purpose, but on the contrary will most willingly afford every assistance in my power. But you must not think of the advertising gentlemen, for, generally speaking, they are the least profitable persons to deal with of all the tribe to which they belong."

"Then, in what quarter am I to look for assistance?" I enquired.

"To a far different style of animal," was the answer: "one who does not lend money on his own account, but prefers the safer method of acting as an agent for others, whose fears of detection nearly keep pace with their rapacious avarice, and who, not caring to brave the opinion of the world openly, and yet loath to forego any opportunity—however villainous, by which their wealth can be increased—are only too happy in finding a person on whom they can rely, and whose notions of public censure happen not to be so tender as their own.

"Of this description of person, many are to be found in the great Babylon," continued my companion, "yet, as they cannot work for nothing, and as the lender grasps at all he can compass, the sufferer must, of course, be the person borrowing. In short, you must pay an immense deal for the stamp in the first instance, varying in amount to the sum negotiated. It

is then necessary to insure your life, for which they make you pay about twice as much as is demanded by the Insurance Office — a year's amount of which you give in advance. A twelve-month's interest on the whole sum borrowed is then deducted likewise beforehand —the agent must now be paid, and handsomely, for *his* trouble ; then comes a further diminution for expenses—leaving about half the amount for which you have given the annuity. But don't imagine you are to possess yourself of the moiety —quite the reverse—for two thirds of it, at least, you will be expected to receive in goods, *alias* in jewels, wine, or merchandize, not worth one tenth part of their nominal value. And it has not unfrequently happened that the victim has been compelled to take some cart-loads of cast muskets from the Tower, or even a few ship-loads of Portland-stone to commence traffic with—the poor balance is then handed over, and the goods are bought back by the party who advanced them, under cover of a third

person, for about one fifth of the price at which they were before valued. However," added the Captain, "I know a fellow, partly lawyer, partly money agent, and partly any thing you please, if it will only produce coin. He is of course a great rogue, but I believe not more so than his neighbours, and indeed not so much—and, that the man is capable of some feelings of gratitude, a little anecdote of him, which occurred last week, may tend to convince you."

I, of course, professed my anxiety to be enlightened, when my companion proceeded.

"You must know, Mr. Austin, that a great friend of mine," whom, by the by, I had afterwards some reason to suspect was the speaker himself, "was informed of the death of a near and ancient relative, from whom it was supposed he would derive a very considerable accession of fortune. My friend had two cousins—and the relation above named had educated and brought up the three boys as though they were his own sons. Arrived at manhood, each sought

different professions, my acquaintance following our lucrative trade of the army, while the others sought a more quiet and retired path to walk in. The deceased had always shown a great partiality for the soldier in preference to the others ; in so much so that he was always looked upon by all, not even excepting his cousins, as the old gentleman's heir.

“Our profession, as doubtless by this time you have discovered, my good sir, is not the most money-making one extant, and so my acquaintance found it ; but, having made the experiment of drawing bills on his relative, which succeeded to admiration, the expense entailed by his regiment affected him but little —and so perseveringly silent and accommodating were the bankers, whenever the drafts were presented, that the young officer soon looked upon his uncle's name as a talismanic word which, when affixed to paper, instantly converted it into gold.

“Things were thus progressing — the fa-

vourite nephew drawing on his relative in the most thoughtless and extravagant manner, while the two prudent cousins, having neither occasion nor inclination for expensive habits, lived nearly within the income which their different pursuits and professions afforded.

"About three weeks since, the old gentleman sent for his lawyer, and made his last final will, the purport of which came to light before the defunct's luminary was extinguished, in the following manner.

"The hero of my story, having occasion to pay some large bets, which he had imprudently staked on a matter regarding which he was wholly uninformed, rather hesitated at drawing on his uncle for so large an amount, but preferring the obnoxious system of *post obit*, proceeded to the lawyer, whom I have just recommended to you, and who, moreover, was under some pecuniary obligations to my friend, who had, in days long past, rescued him from considerable difficulty. Now, the lawyer well knew

that no one would advance money on a *post obit*, unless the person raising the loan was certain of coming into possession of, at least, the amount required ; and it being well known to him that the old gentleman, whose life was to be made a subject of speculation in the market, had just perpetrated his will, away he journeyed to his brother lawyer, by whom the document was drawn up, and, to his consternation, was informed that one hundred and fifty thousand pounds having been the total of the uncle's property, he had determined on dividing it equally among the three nephews : but, as my friend had already consumed nearly his share of the amount, nothing would come to his possession, saving the balance between what he had squandered and the fifty thousand pounds, which was originally intended for him, but which had now dwindled nearly to nothing. What was to be done ? My little lawyer and his client was sadly posed ; but, before they would resolve on any plan to adopt, the old

gentleman departed this life. Suddenly a thought struck the brain of the man of business, and, desiring the unfortunate nephew to remain in town, down he posted to the house of mourning, where the two cousins were awaiting the arrival of the third, without whose presence it was deemed improper to open the Will, since, having always been marked out by his uncle as the favourite, it was universally considered (as has already been stated) that the largest part of the property would fall into the possession of the young soldier.

“It was a cold, bleak evening, when the professional man and his clerk made their appearance at the mansion, the day following that of the old gentleman’s decease. Every thing wore an air of discomfort, excepting the small room where the two cousins were seated, preparatory to partaking their dinner, which was in the act of being served up.

“The lawyer introduced himself as the man of business of the expected relative, and was

unavoidably invited to join in the repast. To this he appeared to offer no objection whatever; and, to judge from his facetious remarks and pleasant stories, no great portion of melancholy oppressed his mind or thoughts on the occasion. Gaily he talked, and, though the others spoke not one word to his fifty, still they could not escape pledging him in the many bumpers which, with great adroitness, he forced before them.

“The cloth having been removed, and the servants withdrawn, one of his hosts naturally enquired when it was probable their cousin could arrive, since they were averse to opening the will before he made his appearance; yet, as it was possible instructions relative to the funeral might be contained in the paper, it was desireable that the seal should be broken as speedily as convenient.

“With your view of the case, gentlemen,” commenced the lawyer, instantly assuming an aspect of serious woe, which would have brought

any professional mute three guineas a funeral, without difficulty—‘in your opinion, gentlemen, both my afflicted client and myself fully, and without reserve, participate ; it was for that purpose, and to avoid further delay, he despatched me hither ; but, before unclosing the document, I am directed to make an offer on behalf of your cousin, which certainly evinces greater generosity and nobleness of mind than people are often given credit for in this wicked world.’ Here came forth the hypocrite’s handkerchief which, having been applied to his eyes, for what purpose was best known to himself, he thus proceeded :

“ ‘The offer, gentlemen, which I was instructed to make on behalf of your relative, was to this effect :’ here the cousins, gazing anxiously on the lawyer, bent their bodies as far forward as the chairs would allow, craning, as if gaping over a fence which they had not courage sufficient to ride at.

“ ‘ Well, sir,’ they exclaimed together ; ‘ well, sir, what was it ? ’

“‘Don’t hurry me, I implore you, gentlemen, all in good time;’ cried the wary quill-driver; ‘but first I am to request you will bear in mind that your acceding or otherwise to the proposal is, of course, wholly at your own option; my client,’ shrugging up his shoulders, as if to that gentleman it was a matter of most perfect indifference; ‘my client having no object whatever but your benefit.’

“‘Well, but what is it, sir?’ again cried the cousins.

“‘You cannot but remember,’ continued the professional gentleman, without regarding their interruptions, ‘that, during your uncle’s life, your absent cousin was invariably selected by your deceased relative,’ here again walked out the handkerchief—took a rub at his eyes, and retired; ‘as his companion when a child, and his confidante when grown a man. The expensive profession in which he placed him was in itself sufficient to prove his partiality; and, as you must be well aware, gentlemen, he has ever

been looked upon as your defunct relation's heir. It is not for me, gentlemen, to say whether such a line of conduct was based on justice and right, or whether it was dictated by a blind and unjustifiable preference which nothing whatever could excuse, but this much I may say—to wit, that what I have asserted is true, and that, moreover, it is presumed by every one conversant with the family that the will, when open, will declare my client entitled to the bulk of the deceased's property. Gentlemen, let me ask, is not such the case?

“The cousins sulkily, and in silence, bowed assent.

“‘Good!’ exclaimed the man of quibbles, ‘and now mark the magnanimity of your cousin. The will is as yet unopened—every body, and with great cause, looks on my client as the probable, nay, almost certain, heir. All he has to do is to get in his carriage, drive down, read the will, and take possession of the estate.’ The cousins groaned audibly, and one

took snuff. ‘But, instead of acting as ten thousand others would act, he despatches me down to state his regret if the undue partiality of his uncle has created the slightest unpleasant sensation at any time within your bosoms, and moreover that, should you approve, he will now enter into an agreement to divide equally among all three, whatever property may be bequeathed between you ; there, gentlemen, is a noble offer, it is for you to accept or refuse. In the former case I am instructed to draw up a document to the aforesaid effect ; in the latter, to call on the professional gentleman in whose hands the will rests, and demand its instant perusal.’

“‘Did my cousin really authorise your making this proposal?’ enquired they both in quick succession.

“‘Undoubtedly he did, gentlemen ; and, as a further proof, behold the deed, legally executed, with his name affixed thereto on his part ; and, if you like the proposal, nothing is wanting but your signatures.’

"Suffice to say," concluded Captain Daillie, "the cousins jumped at the offer—the bell was rung—the clerk appeared—drank a glass of wine, which was proffered by the elated youths—signed his name as witness to the deed, as likewise did a fat old butler, without knowing what it was about; and, pleading urgent business which called for his immediate departure, the wily lawyer returned to town, having obtained for his employer the third part of one hundred and four thousand pounds, instead of the four thousand only, without participation in the larger amount."

"And a lucrative journey it turned out to the lawyer, I dare say, as well as to your friend?" I remarked, inquiringly.

"I doubt it not," he replied; "but of that I know nothing; and now, having given you a specimen of the fellow's abilities, you can employ him or not, as you think proper; but if you *must* dabble in dirt, I don't think you can do better than make use of him, in return for

which, you may rest assured he will not fail in making use of you."

"I dare say he will not," was my reply; "but, nevertheless, I'll try; and, if not inconvenient to you, I should propose our breakfasting together, after which, we can adjourn to the field of action."

"Agreed, and with pleasure," responded the Captain; and, taking a bed-room candlestick, he proceeded up-stairs to give his Blenheims their supper of cold fowl and maraschino.

## CHAPTER IV.

TRUE to his appointment, Captain Daillie made his appearance at breakfast ; and, offering me a seat in his curricle—for, in those days, cabriolets had not an existence, even in imagination—we proceeded to the lawyer's, from whom, having received a letter of introduction to a noted usurer, and also assurances of his aid in furthering my wishes, we again started for a small street not very distant from my hotel. And, as a brief description of Jonathan Brownley, and his laudable mode of making money, may happily serve some of my brother-soldiers, by pointing out the shoal on which so many

have struck, I will attempt to pourtray this admirably useful member of society.

In a small front room on the ground floor of his not very spacious mansion sat this being, whose entire soul appeared wrapt up in the exquisite delight afforded by the perusal of a ponderous volume placed before him — the partial light which was permitted to enter the apartment above the high, green window-blinds sufficed to illume the pages of the unwieldy folio, throwing, at the same time, a portion of its influence on the pale, fat cheeks of the usurer, who persevered in his task with an assiduity which no less important occupation would have merited.

Apparently about the age of forty, the hair had already forsaken the back part of his calculating skull—his eyes, small and piercing, were no bad criterion of the shrewd cunning of the possessor—while his short, but portly, figure bore evident testimony that, amidst the severe and frequent labours of the mind, he did not

fail in paying due attention to the well-being of his corporeal frame—his countenance could not boast of the rosy hue, but possessed, from long practice, what, to the wearer, was of far more intrinsic worth—the power of assuming, at any time and under any circumstances, whatever expression he might judge the occasion to require.

Blessed with a conscience most conveniently accommodating in all emergencies, with an unequalled share of the most consummate impudence—a tongue, never yet known at a loss when advocating the cause of his all-engrossing pursuit, self-interest, added to a manner, in appearance, frankness itself, with a seeming desire of serving to the uttermost any of his *dear friends*,—he had, partly through his artful hypocrisy, but chiefly owing to a thorough knowledge of human nature, and his business, contrived to amass no inconsiderable portion of the comforts of this world.

In the hope of still further adding to his

ill-gotten wealth, this worthy man continued to labour incessantly in the cause of Mammon; neither was he left in solitude by a world anxious as it generally is to reprobate and contemn the delinquencies of others, be they ever so trifling. On the contrary, his knocker was seldom at rest, and, to judge by the numbers who daily waited upon the respected gentleman, it might have been supposed that he was the most popular man in London.

Peers, commoners, the expectant heir, the dissipated roué, each, in their turn, essayed for entrance to the aforesaid small parlour of Jonathan Brownley. But Jonathan was not long permitted to indulge undisturbed in the perusal of his favourite volume, for, ere he had well scanned over the names of half a score unfortunate wretches whose rank, title, and expectations were there fully and circumstantially detailed, my friend pulled up his curricle at the door, and, loudly rebuking the lank-haired, sallow-visaged clerk for his unsea-

sonable opposition, forced himself into the presence of the money-agent.

There was an attempt at good-humoured familiarity in the tone of voice assumed by the gallant Captain, when addressing the scrivener, that but ill corresponded with the scornful expression of his countenance, which plainly indicated his aversion to the loathsome task of assuming, through compulsion, the air and language of a friend towards one whom it were impossible to regard otherwise than with contempt.

“Ah, Jonathan, my old friend!” commenced his visitor; “my trusty aider in all cases of difficulty and embarrassment, how prosper you? But I need not enquire—your good looks proclaim how you have been, and are likely to continue—never in my life saw you better—the scythe of old Time inflicts no deep wounds on you—not it. By Jove! A leaf out of your book would be worth having—particularly,” he con-

tinued mentally, “the one out of that overgrown folio headed with my own name.

“I should have replied sooner to your last letter,” he added aloud, but in somewhat of an apologetical tone, “had I not been coming up to town thus early; and, consequently, I could not think of occupying your valuable time in conning over my epistles—not that you mind the expense of my correspondence—oh no! that, I am fully aware, must be quite out of the question—expense, to a man of your wealth, cannot be a matter of any moment—not the most remote, certainly. But, by - the - by, Jonathan, talking of expense, and all that sort of thing, there is a small favour which you could much oblige me by complying with; my friend here, Mr. Austin—oh, beg pardon, forgot to introduce him—Mr. Austin, Mr. Brownley—Mr. Brownley, Mr. Austin, an officer in the —th Hussars, heir to large estates, &c. &c.” and then came the ten thousandth time told story of my death, resurrection, and deprivation of

money; to all and each part of which account the usurer paid strict attention, and occasionally made notes of the information thus communicated.

“ By this, Jonathan,” pursued the Captain, “ it must be very plain to you that all my friend has to do is to re-appear before his relations, and claim his legal right, which, of course, cannot, in any shape, be disputed. I therefore look upon it that you may consider his bond for the money as ample security for anything you may advance. But I say, Jonathan, don’t screw him too tight, as you did me a few months back; for the last sum I had of your friend Crosstock was but three thousand pounds, and out of that he managed to deduct so enormous an amount, under the head of insurance, interest, and God knows what, that hardly any thing fell to my lot in a tangible shape, as, I dare say, you may chance to remember—but that’s all past and gone. The matter now before us is a sum of money to be

procured for this gentleman—he wants it—is ready to negotiate—you know where to procure it—so, will you let him have it? Mr. Austin is fully aware that he must *pay*, and I am equally certain that you have not any objection to take, a most exorbitant sum, in recompense for the accommodation.”

“ *Me* take an exorbitant sum,” cried the usurer, as though he felt most cruelly and unjustifiably accused, “ *me* take an exorbitant sum: bless me, Captain Daillie, you wrong me much—very much indeed, sir, surely you know me better by this time! The accusation is cruel, sir—absolutely cruel—you’ve hurt my feelings—painfully—poignantly, Captain Daillie—fearfully hurt them—very—”

“ I’m extremely sorry, and much regret that such should be the case,” answered the Captain, who began to fear, considering the balance against him as laid down in the awful folio, that, peradventure, he was going something too far. “ You know, Jonathan, I could have no desire to annoy you; besides which old friends will

have their joke, and, at this time of all others, I should least wish to offend, since, exclusive of the accommodation for Mr. Austin, which I trust you will accomplish, I want a small loan on my own account."

"On your own account, Captain Daillie! Oh, lord, sir, where do you suppose I am to scrape the money together? Let me see—page 42—here's your amount, Captain—interest on four thousand pounds, due the tenth of February last, to Crosstock and Co., not paid—interest on two thousand pounds, due the thirteenth of last month, to Messrs. Jodds, Hodds, and Co., not paid—interest due."

"That will do, that will do, Jonathan, you know you've good security for all these sums—aye and for much more, too—but, first of all, will you arrange Mr. Austin's affair?"

"I should be happy in accommodating Mr. Austin, but really I cannot take upon myself to make any specific promise," answered the agent, "until I have conferred with a gentleman who,

I know, has much interest with another party, who, probably, may be enabled to obtain what you desire—but remember, I make no promises. Indeed money is so extremely scarce, and our political horizon so clouded—the present so embarrassing, and the future so very doubtful—that those persons who possess a little wealth are most unwilling to part with it. It would be madness for a man of funded property to sell out, and gentlemen with land can raise nothing on their acres. As for myself, I would with pleasure advance the money forthwith, but as you well know, Captain, I have not a shilling."

"I know nothing of the sort," angrily replied my friend, in some degree losing his temper; "but I can inform you of what I *do* know, and that is, that I am pretty conversant with your old tricks and apologies, merely to create delay. I am as fully aware of the difficulties you are prepared to alledge as you are yourself. Do you suppose, Jonathan," he added, laughing, "that I never heard the story of your having a

friend who is acquainted with a gentleman, who is on the point of marrying a very rich heiress, and, the moment the knot is tied, the money shall be advanced? And hundreds of similar tales with which you continue to amuse, and then disappoint, your clients—oh, 'tis all nonsense, man, and the money you must procure—as for myself, I tell you frankly that, if you do not help me, a disclosure must inevitably take place—the governor will in all probability cast me off without a shilling; and you will have the melancholy duty to perform of incarcerating your *dear* friend in some vile sponging house, without the most distant prospect of ever being repaid one farthing;—on the other hand, you have added, through my instrumentality, in no trifling degree to your funds—your riches are still increasing at the expense of my patrimony, and, for aught I can see to the contrary, the sum total of my expectations will eventually be transferred to repose under the name of Jonathan Brownley, in greater security and with less

chance of being disturbed, than it is likely to enjoy while I possess a claim to it."

"Bless me, Captain Daillie," was the instant rejoinder, "bless me, sir, how you talk—do you think I could ever wish such an event! No, sir, no, I trust I have conscience, as well as my neighbours. You wrong me much, Captain—much, sir—indeed you do—but the money, sir, the money which you say you want, I have it not, sir—on my life, I know not where to seek it."

"I cannot stay here all day, Jonathan, arguing the point," he replied, "answer me at once, yes or no? Your chance of ultimate payment you know to be good—the amount of interest now due you can deduct from the fresh loan, therefore I pray you, most worthy Crœsus, are we to have the money, and at the same time the felicity of meeting your prosperous and much respected ally Mr. Crosstock, with a face as long as his purse, and the latter as accommodating as his conscience? Or am I to give five-and

twenty per cent to some less esteemed person than yourself? Mr. Austin wants two thousand, and I only want three, making, as you well know, the trifling amount of five thousand pounds."

During the foregoing speech, Jonathan not only listened to the wants and wishes of his visitor, but with his habitual quickness, in all matters of finance, he had been adding together the various amounts of sums due by my companion; and, by his sharp and quick reply, it would seem the scrutiny had not been entirely to his satisfaction.

"Five thousand pounds, Captain Daillie—only five thousand, you say—bless me, where do you suppose I can procure five thousand? Surely you're in jest, Captain? None but madmen would sell out now—funds down at 75, impossible—why, upon my sacred honour, sir, I could not raise that sum, if my life depended on it—absolutely impossible, sir, there is no such sum in the market—just look ye, Captain,

it would take ages to scrape five thousand pounds together in the present day—absolutely ages—the thing is morally and totally impossible, Captain Daillie, and I can't do it—bless me, I might as well look for the philosopher's stone as for five thousand pounds—bless me—”

And in this strain would he have proceeded, had not his impatient creditor been well taught, by experience, that the present affectation of surprise was but the introductory forerunner of an' extra charge per cent. So, quickly volunteering to advance the required amount, the exclamations and wondering ejaculations of Jonathan “dwindled to a calm.”

That being accomplished, it was settled that on that day week—for by no possible argument or entreaty could the money-scrivener be prevailed on to name an earlier period—I was to proceed, under the guidance of Daillie, to the neighbourhood of Russel-square, where I was informed I should find Mr. Crosstock in readiness, who would produce a portion of the

money together with a beautifully written deed, which latter was to be signed, sealed, and delivered by the unfortunate borrowers and their securities.

Deductions for agency and time, added to the value at which those gentlemen were pleased to estimate their disinterested services, reduced my two thousand pounds considerably, what they deducted from Daillie I did not enquire ; but, as the amount to which I was fleeced is well impressed on my memory, I will give the separate items as made out against me, when I called on the appointed day for a settlement. The mode they adopted was this : Crosstock appeared, talked of the weather, the last political occurrence, the casual news of the day, &c., while Jonathan was producing the deeds—all being ready, I signed and sealed—Daillie becoming my security. That finished, Crosstock handed me two thousand pounds in notes, which however was instantly snatched away by the former, with whom I journeyed back to his house ;

When we arrived, the huge ledger was again consulted—a new entry was opened on my account, and the following little memorandum inscribed on a separate piece of paper, presented before me:

Expenses of stamp for Deed, &c.....	£ 70
One year's interest on £2000, in advance....	240
Trouble and journeys.....	60
Expenses incurred, consultations, coaches, &c.	80
Fees to Clerks, &c.....	30
Plate .....	660
	—
	£1140
Balance in favour.....	860
	—
	£2000
	—

Thus for eight hundred and sixty pounds, and a lot of old plate which I afterwards parted with for one hundred and seventy, I granted an annuity of two hundred and forty pounds for seven years, at the expiration of which period I was to pay two thousand pounds in order to recover my bond.

I have perhaps minutely detailed my interview with the worthy Jonathan at a greater

length than may have proved amusing; but should my statement have the good fortune to deter any of my readers, yet hesitating upon the bank, from plunging into the fatal stream, I shall consider neither the time nor trouble as having been thrown away. Many have I known who, commencing as it were cautiously upon the brink, have been insensibly carried far out of their depth, and discovered their danger, only to be convinced how utterly hopeless and ineffectual must be their utmost endeavours to regain that safely whence they were tempted to stray, madly to rush headlong on their irreparable ruin.

There are many follies of which in the days of our boyhood we may have been guilty, from the effects of which we suffer bitterly in after years; but from few excesses do we derive so small a portion of self-congratulation, in our manhood, as the remembrance of having foolishly and thanklessly squandered our money.

In most instances nought remains to account

for its departure ; and to what bourne it went few have any relish to enquire—but that it *has* gone we are confident, as also that, in consequence thereof, our income has most considerably diminished.

This can be proved to a moral certainty by any unfortunate being so circumstanced, simply by a comparison between what his rent roll was before he came of age—and what it is now. No fiend in the Freitzchutz ever conjured up more deadly objects to affright the soul of Caspar than the small calf-skinned banker's book awakes in the bosom of its owner, when, after pondering for a protracted period over the ruinous state of his finances, he is made visibly conscious of the truth of his surmises, by the dread array of pounds, shillings, and pence, then and there detailed as wanting.

“ Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,” said or sung King Solomon ; and had he lived in the nineteenth century, he would have been as fully convinced, if not more so, of the cor-

rectness of his maxim as when he first gave utterance to it.

On this principle, I advise all gentlemen, more particularly those who dwell in suburban retreats, far from the great Babylon, and whose minds are so framed that too much anxiety or annoyance is far more difficult to contend with than is found to be the case with their more polished brethren—I would advise those gentlemen never to look back at their accounts, if for the sole purpose of lamenting over what has been lost, without attempting to guard against a repetition of the evil; it will save many a fruitless, vain regret; and spare perchance an extra furrow to the brow. And who likes to look older than he is?

Deem not, from what I have uttered, that diminution of money and loss of money only can, to my mind, cause a desponding feeling at a later period of existence—far different is the case. But though many causes may arise calculated to add sorrow for past imprudencies,

there are few that annoy us more than the unavailing regret at having squandered those sums which an increased experience points out the folly of having thrown away, and our accumulating demands too palpably prove the value of.

Yet there are doubtless many other causes, and poignant ones too, that bring any thing but satisfaction to our bosoms from a retrospective review—opportunities of advancement, which, when within reach, we neglected—or wilfully passed over moments when a word or look of kindness might have brought about the termination of long estrangement. In short, I cannot imagine that mortal to exist who can, with truth, declare that, at no one period of his life can he look back without the least portion of regret.

If the bright eye that now gazes on this page beams from amid the dark glossy ringlets of a woman, cannot that fair being likewise call to mind some deep and bitter cause for sorrow, aggravated perhaps by contemptible vanity or

wilful folly, and which it is now too late to remedy, but not yet too distant to remember? But I am running away from my narrative, and in good sooth I never think of those bloodsuckers of the human race—usurers—without falling into peculiarly unpleasant reflections. Yet one anecdote of Jonathan I *must* give, and then willingly—as far as lays in my power—consign him to oblivion.

The three thousand pounds which Captain Daillie received, or rather that portion which they assigned him, did not prove less evanescent and perishable than did the other sums which had preceded it; the consequence was that, in due course of time, he again made his appearance at Brownley's—not for the purpose of borrowing as he assured an acquaintance, whom by the servant's bad management he was allowed to stumble upon in the passage—but merely “to lay out his money to the best advantage.”

In this instance, however, Jonathan was not to be talked over. From the petitioning debtor,

he could get neither principal nor interest, and more money he was determined not to advance. What was to be done? Daillie had heard the fat porpoise complain of the impossibility of getting sufficient exercise, since he could not walk any great distance, and the expense of buying a quadruped was too awful, in the miser's eyes, to be contemplated for a moment.

In this dilemma, the gallant officer bethought him of making the usurer a present of an animal, and, having broadly hinted to that effect, Jonathan, who was no ways dull of comprehension where his own interests were concerned, readily entered into a minute detail of the qualifications which, if he had a horse, he should wish it to possess.

The coveted brute must be a pony—good walker and trotter; but his canter was immaterial, since Jonathan had not the most distant notion of indulging in such velocity of motion. All he wanted was to be well shaken, and thereby procure an appetite for dinner.

Now it so happened that a beast of exactly this description was waiting at Tattersal's for a buyer; but, having been nerved, his value (like the Roman Empire) had considerably declined. At a walk, or slow trot, he was comparatively safe, but at a faster rate, it was even main and chance whether he retained the position which by nature it was intended he should assume, or whether he would grind his nose along the earth like a poodle-dog hunting for truffles.

Here was a chance for the money-wanting Captain. The pony, in all probability, would go safe enough at the slow pace, and even should Jonathan attempt, under any extraordinary excitement, to boil a canter, as the steamers have it, the chances were even on the horse's retaining his legs; and, suppose he did come down? What then? Who cares? Not he. So off he went—gave fifteen pounds for the beast, and the following evening saw Jonathan wending his way to the park for a constitutional

ride. All went well—the animal behaved beautifully—the usurer was enchanted—in a week the Lancer contracted a fresh loan—and all progressed swimmingly. But such prosperity could not last for ever—one unlucky day, the calculating mortal was showing off himself and his steed, much to his own satisfaction and the amusement of the populace, when an envious shower of rain descended on his devoted head—umbrella he had none—no place of shelter appeared—what could he do? He could not dismount, and sit under his horse, for fear the horse would not stand to be sat under—no—he must gallop—there was no help for it, gallop he must. So, shutting both eyes, and laying tight hold of the pommel of the saddle, regardless of the reins, he communicated his wishes by a kick on his Bucephalus's ribs, and off they started to escape the deluge. But they did not go far together; for the pony, as might have been expected, putting his nerved foot upon some broken ground, down he went foremost,

and up went Jonathan backwards, and alighting on his fat spongy face, lost three front teeth without having been put to one farthing's expense by a dentist.

Whether Brownley was anxious about the non-payment of the money due by the Lancer, or whether he fancied the horse's falling to have been caused through that gentleman's instrumentality, and on which account he conceived against him a most implacable hatred, cannot be gathered ; but, the mode he adopted by way of revenge was explicit and effectual enough—he wrote to Daillie's father, enclosing a beautifully written copy of all the sums, both principal as well as interest, due by the promising son.

The storm now raged with all its fury—old Brownley kept within his doors, for fear of a public horsewhipping at the hands of the infuriated Lancer, while the latter, in his turn, kept equally aloof from the paternal mansion. Things continued in this state for some time, until the

governor wisely considered that, somehow, and sometime or other, "the money must be paid ; and, as such was the case, the longer the delay the greater the amount of interest was accruing ; and, under all circumstances, he resolved this once more, and for the last time, to meet these most exorbitant demands upon his purse. Accordingly, the debtor and creditor were appointed to meet at the father's house, at a certain hour, and so extremely punctual were both parties that they met face to face on the stairs.

" You infernal old rascal," cried the officer, " you black - hearted vampire, how dare you betray my secrets, you accursed usurer ? But, before you leave this house, I'll take care you shall have cause to remember your ingratitude."

" Bless me !" exclaimed the frightened wretch, at finding himself in such close proximity to the betrayed. " Bless me, Captain, don't be so angry now—don't ye—It 's all for your good, I

assure you—now, you don't know it, but I'm your best friend, on the honour of a gentleman, I am."

"How so, you hypocritical sinner?" inquired the officer.

"Simply thus, my dear Captain—" he replied.

"Don't *dear* me, you complicated mass of iniquity, but say what you mean quickly, or peradventure you may take a vault over these banisters;" and, suiting the action to the word, he caught the fat figure of the miser by the throat, and seemed well inclined to illustrate his threat.

"Bless me, Captain Daillie, pray, pray sir, let me go, and I'll explain. Now, hav'nt I got your father to settle all your debts? Have I not done that?"

"Granted," replied the other; "but what of that, I well know it was not to serve *me* you did it; and, as it was impossible to advantage you as to whether I paid the real lenders sooner or later, as you had already received your share of

the plunder, I look upon your meddling as a gratuitous piece of uncalled-for, officious impertinence—had it benefitted you, in any way, I could have forgiven you.”

“Bless me, my dear Captain,” whispered the other, “to be sure it *does* benefit me greatly. Look ye, sir, you know my profits arise from the granting and making out the annuity deeds at the commencement, and at their being paid off at the end: I get nothing as agent during the interval. Now, by this arrangement with your father, I shall gain considerably; for, as you well know, the lenders would advance no more, on account of your already owing so much, it was impossible for me to make them; and, consequently, my profits, as far as concerned *you*, were at a close. Not so now, your good father, Captain, is paying them off; that benefits me—puts you all square—and then, Captain”—putting his finger to the side of his nose, and half shutting his cunning looking small eyes—“and then, Captain—”

"Well, and what then, sir?" demanded the Lancer.

"Why, we shall be all ready *to commence a fresh chalk*, Captain." And, grinning at the success of his iniquities, he hobbled on his way to the audience.

## CHAPTER V.

“WHY don’t you light up your house, Stultz?” enquired a customer of the fashionable tailor, one evening when all London was blazing with transparencies in honour of some victory achieved by the Duke in the Peninsula.

“Because,” replied the man of garments, “there never was a battle fought, in which the English participated, that did not cost me some thousand pounds.” And I doubt not but his ledger would have borne him out in the assertion. So in like manner on leaving Crosstock’s mansion, Daillie expressed astonishment at my apparent indifference at the desired accomplishment in effecting my first essay in money raising;

but, though the result of my debut might be, and doubtless was, a source of gratification to the lenders, I possessed sufficient discrimination to feel thoroughly convinced there was very small cause for rejoicing on the part of the borrower—but I had obtained sufficient money to meet the protested bills, and I was satisfied.

It was now the end of December, and town was consequently deserted by almost the whole of that coterie who arrogate to their own small circle the appellation of ‘the world.’ Here and there an aristocratic vehicle might be discovered, slowly progressing through the no longer crowded streets. And now and then an officer of the household troops would for a few seconds make his appearance among the canaille, as the ghost of one long departed may be supposed to hover round the site of its former glories. The air was damp and foggy—the pavements moist and greasy—a stream of mince pies and cake pervaded the whole city; and the bill-stickers were laboriously employed in covering the walls,

and shutters of deserted shops, with accounts of the splendour and decorations of the Christmas pantomimes. Every thing around betokened the approach of that period when bills and children are sent home with the greatest punctuality. And, as in no spot on earth is the season clothed with such an appearance of happiness and festivity as in the country halls of the ‘good old English gentleman,’ so is it impossible to surround the annual visitor with a more cheerless unsocial aspect than he invariably wears in London.

Such at least to me it has always appeared ; and I mentally contrasted my solitary position at Stevens’ compared with the open house and hilarity which I well knew the season was sure to bring round at my uncle’s, and I deeply, though uselessly, lamented the procrastinations of Jonathan, which would detain me a week longer in town.

“ Austin,” said my comparison rousing me from my reverie, “ whose carriage is that that

just passed? Some lady in it waved her hand either to you or me, but most probably to you, since I cannot recollect having had the honour of her acquaintance."

"Not very likely that the compliment was intended towards myself," I replied, "for I am unaware of being acquainted with a single lady in town."

"Perhaps not," answered the facetious Captain, "but you *may* probably with a married one—and see," he continued, checking his horses, "the carriage has pulled up, and a bonnet has half protruded through the window. 'Pon my word, my dear fellow, you must positively dismount—if the lady has made a mistake, you can apologize, and thus gain an acquisition to your acquaintances—if, on the contrary, you *have* met before, why it is very evident there is no inclination to drop the intimacy, on one side at least."

During the time Daillie was occupied in giving his opinion on the momentous point, I

was descending from the lofty curricle, as speedily as my limbs would allow; and, on reaching the carriage which waited in the middle of the street, I was accosted by the handsome and fascinating Celestine Gregory, the lady whose name I so unfortunately brought into notice by my awkward attempts at activity in the corridor of the old Guadalupe General's stair-case.

"*My dear Mr. Austin,*" exclaimed the lady in a tone, and with a pressure of the hand, which was expressive of any thing rather than displeasure at the meeting, "I can't say how delighted I am at seeing you—I could hardly believe my senses, when you passed the carriage this instant—and, even now, I don't feel fully convinced that you are the same rude boy who so unceremoniously disarranged my dinner costume one evening at the general's. But come, get into the carriage, I can set you down any where—I have a thousand things to ask you—and we shall have a crowd round us

speedily, if we remain here in the middle of the street."

It may readily be supposed I needed no second invitation, so, nodding an adieu to my late charioteer, who considered my desertion from him for a fairer cause as a mere matter of course, the steps were let down, and in an instant I was seated by the side of one of the handsomest women of the age.

"I assure you," continued my beautiful companion, "this meeting affords me the more surprize and pleasure as it was generally reported you were dead; and the rumour having gained strength, together with many strange stories connected with you, your friends, despairing of beholding you again, mourned for you, as for one lost to them for ever. But now to find all their surmises erroneous delights me fully as much as it can any of your relatives." And again the small taper fingers found a resting place within my hand ; and by some accidental circumstance—probably through forget-

fulness—they remained in that position during the drive.

“Such kind sentiments, and coming from Mrs. Gregory,” I replied, “would fully repay the most indifferent person for any sufferings he may have undergone; but when you condescend to honour with your notice the most devoted of your friends, I should care little how often I was put to death, provided I was certain of being thus resuscitated.” And, by mere chance, I gave the beautiful little hand within my grasp a slight pressure.

“Oh, nonsense,” rejoined my companion laughing, “I perceive you have made some use of your time, while in Spain, dead or living, for I do not recollect to have heard you utter so many words together during the whole period of my visit at your uncle’s, as you have just delivered. But you must remember, Mr. Austin, you were my protégé then, and a very good boy you were — and,” she continued playfully, “perhaps I may continue my protection if you’

prove yourself as obedient a child as you did formerly."

When last I had parted from Mrs. Gregory prior to joining my regiment, I had certainly discovered by her manner and conversation a feeling of partiality towards me, but the favour which I enjoyed, through her notice, was by myself attributed solely to the kindness of her disposition, in wishing to convince me that the unfortunate affair in the corridor had not engendered feelings of dislike against the unintentional perpetrator of the mischief, but now when I returned from the army, a man—in my own estimation at least—and found this more than ever beautiful creature extending towards me all her former kindness, and, moreover, persevering in considering me a boy—a common but very flimsy protection with which ladies oftentimes attempt to clothe their consciences—I may be pardoned if I allow that I felt no inconsiderable degree of vanity; and possibly ideas may have forced themselves upon my

mind which, having once entered, were far from easy to eradicate.

The lady was older than myself, 'tis certain, and, having seen far more of the fashionable world than I could aspire to boast of, it might be alleged that prudence, if not any stronger sense of propriety, might have dictated a less expressive warmth of manner in her recognition of so slight an acquaintance. All this may be very true, but who can dive into the deep and carefully-concealed recesses of a woman's heart, and that heart, too, cased with an artificial, yet impenetrable, coldness which long communion with a selfish world has taught the owner to assume on most occasions? But, even when the finer and gentler feelings of the sex have been blunted and perverted by the dull intercourse of dissipated society, who can tell but that, within the apparent adamantine wall of ice which repels in discomfiture each attack it may sustain, rushes a torrent of fierce and uncontrollable passion, which, if afforded an oppor-

tunity of escape, may, in all probability, overwhelm every thing before it !

Besides which, how many women are there who, through pique at real or supposed neglect will elevate some—to her—indifferent individual—in favour, and lavish upon him, publicly, uncalled-for kindnesses and marked attentions, in the hope of wounding the object of her now deadly hatred—and thus, for the mere gratification of annoying a breast which, possibly, may view her manœuvres with the most perfect indifference, she for ever loses that name among her acquaintance which it has hitherto, and successfully, been her pride to maintain ; and tales of guilt are quickly circulated, at her expense, which, in truth, have only their foundation in a weakly, puerile, and perhaps unamiable line of conduct !

How often have we beheld, amid the glittering constellations which enchant our earthly sphere, some bright and beauteous star—the admiration of all—the love of many—whose almost heavenly

appearance might induce the beholder to imagine that a being so exquisitely lovely must have descended from her own pure abode of unalloyed felicity to disseminate among the grosser creatures of this orb the practical illustration of each virtue which could ensure happiness here and endless felicity hereafter—yet, in a little time, have we seen this nearly angelic creature fall from the giddy height where the worship of her admirers had placed her, down to the lowest ebb of suffering anguish—there to grovel in the dust with shame and misery as her companions—reviled and despised by her own sex—and most acrimoniously of all by those whose only claim to exemption from a similar lot consists either in their more practised deceit, and consequent successful concealment, or the utter disregard with which the world passes by, unnoticed, their pigmy and contemptible insignificance.

Among the many cases which could be here cited, there was one, the recollection of which

must strike a terror and a warning to the very soul of all who become acquainted with the particulars.

The heroine of this catastrophe united in her own person the advantages of youth, beauty, rank, and fortune. Married to her equal in all respects, and superior in wealth to herself, she moved in the circle which she was apparently destined to adorn, the admiration of men, and —alas, for human nature!—the envy of women. She was the delight of her parents—the beloved of her husband—and almost the idol of her friends—she was a fond mother—an affectionate daughter—and a dutiful wife. This life seemed to possess no blessing which she could not command. Grief, poverty, and suffering were, to her, but as fictitious tales of woe; and all who gazed upon her prosperity unhesitatingly pronounced her happy. And yet she fell—irrevocably fell—never in this world to raise her head again—and for what was the sacrifice offered? What dread temptation suggested

the fatal step? What accursed demon urged her to quit her home, her husband, her friends, her children, and her reputation, for ever? What solid inducement was held out, in comparison with which the scale weighed light, although she cast into it her own shame, her husband's agony, a parent's curse, the finger of scorn which, through life, would single out her children from the world, the ruin of her house, and the lasting dishonour of her name? What was offered as a balance against this awful account? Nothing — neither rank, wealth, beauty, accomplishments, worldly honour, nor distinction—all—all were wanting—yet, she fell —she, once the loved, the young, the beautiful, sunk into the dark, dreary abyss of guilt, remorse, and self-upbraiding, from which she looked but to death as her sole—yet sure—relief!

From necessity, or some less justifiable cause, the author of all this calamity sought refuge in temporary banishment — thither she followed

him—for to none other could this poor erring sinner lean for support; and, in the beautiful words of Euphrosyne, when appealing to Anastasius, she might have exclaimed, “For, at least in your presence I shall have no cause to blush.”

Poverty, with her long train of miseries, now crowded thickly on the scene—and guilt—more guilt and wretchedness—had yet to embitter the cup of poignant anguish which it was destined she should swallow.

To carry this heart-rending picture through all the scenes of low vice and degrading profligacy, in which it was the fate of this unhappy creature to participate, cannot now avail. Let it suffice that, from the palmy state of innocence and wealth, in two short years, the miserable victim drank deeply, to the very dregs, of poverty and crime—poverty in its *very* extreme, and crime of the most hideous and appalling nature. From this state of perfect anguish she was soon released; and her last sigh was breathed in one of the

meanest description of those purlieus the nature of which, to her, but a few months before, had been unknown, even in name:—a common deal coffin, at the expense of the parish, and borne by the inmates of the work-house, carried all that remained of this once beautiful woman to the grave. That *her* sins may be pardoned hereafter, her sufferings on earth might induce us humbly to hope—what *his* present feelings may be, none, save himself, *can* know—and what may, eventually, be his award remains for a higher than a frail and erring earthly tribunal to pronounce!

It is a story oft told, but, alas! not the less true for that, but

Gladly I turn me from the sight  
Unto my tale again.

It so happened there were many reasons why Mrs. Gregory saw fit and proper to lavish upon my unworthy self the notice with which I was honoured. First, she was a great friend of my uncle's, and, consequently, that friendship

might, with much propriety, be extended to his nephew: secondly, I was, in a measure, risen from the dead, and, therefore, a *rara avis* of the greatest magnitude: thirdly, I was, as the lady assured me, only a boy: and fourthly—and perhaps the best reason of all—her husband was, at that moment, absent from London, leaving her to indulge in such whims and fancies as might be most agreeable to her.

On reaching her house in South-Audley-street, I was overwhelmed with questions of all sorts and descriptions as applied to my short campaign; and, more than once, my handsome companion expressed her annoyance at being compelled to dine out—Mr. Gregory having made a point of her accepting the invitation to a stupid party of his relations, before he left town; “but,” added the lady, “I have so many things to ask you, and so much to relate regarding your own family, with which you must necessarily be unacquainted, that, if it is not taxing your time and good-nature too severely,

I would ask you to come and sit for half-an-hour with a poor, lone, solitary woman, this evening."

As may readily be conjectured, there was little occasion for this invitation being repeated, as I gladly accepted the flattering offer; and, on my return to Bond-street, every object I met assumed a far more agreeable aspect than I had viewed them through during the morning; and I much marvelled within myself how I could have been such a fool as to have thought London stupid, even in December—in fact, I had not fully made up my mind whether December was not the most preferable month of all, when my cogitations were interrupted with—"Please, sir, dinner 's on the table."

## CHAPTER VI.

IT was about ten o'clock, when I found myself at the door of Mrs. Gregory's house in South Audley-street; and, unfashionably early as I knew such an hour must be for leaving a party, yet, having been expressly desired to come before it was late, I concluded the lady would arrange her escape, and possibly might already have arrived at home---but I was mistaken; for, on enquiry whether his mistress had returned, the servant replied in the negative, but requested me to walk up stairs.

The room into which I was ushered was beautifully furnished, not solely as regarded the magnificence and cost of the various com-

ponent parts, but the good taste with which each article had been selected and arranged denoted the refined elegance of the presiding deity. A few pictures ornamented the walls ; and the thousand little expensive articles of useless bijouterie, which invariably bedeck a lady's boudoir, were strewn around. Vases filled with the most delicious flowers (though it was now the middle of winter), perfumed the air ; and the cheerful blaze from the English coal fire, threw an air of warmth and comfort on all around. Having thus taken a slight survey of the apartment, my attention was engaged by a rose-coloured silk curtain which, suspended from the ceiling, was drawn so as partly to conceal, yet equally to reveal an aperture beyond, whence issued a soft mellow light, well according with the costliness and silence of the scene.

On removing the silken drapery, I entered a smaller, though equally beautiful sanctum, which, from the many indications around, at

once pronounced it the private and favourite retreat of the fair owner of the mansion ; at one end a small conservatory jutted out from the building, wherein bloomed, as though luxuriating under a summer's sun, the choicest exotics procurable. It would be in vain to attempt a description of the various luxuries which adorned this room, and invited the visitor to repose. It seemed as though I had entered the magic abode of some fabled tempter, where every thing that could ensnare the senses, and enervate the mind by the influence of the delicious languor which was imperceptibly, yet fast, rivetting her chains around the victim, had been here concentrated into one focus.

Neither did I, in reality, wholly escape the contagious power which seemed to breathe around, but, taking a volume which lay open before me, I threw myself on an Ottoman, and, engaged in the perusal of the book, I patiently awaited the appearance of the goddess herself.

Ten o'clock had long since past, still she

came not—half-past ten, yet all was quiet as before—eleven struck, not a sound was to be heard; and, unromantic as I must appear in the eyes of all young ladies, who may chance to peruse these volumes, yet the truth must be told, however low I may thereby fall in their estimation. Whether it was the soft luxurious ease of the tempting resting-place whereon I reclined, or the delicious perfume of the flowers, or the enchanting voluptuousness of all around, or the soporific effects consequent on the perusal of the memoir which I held in my hand; whether it arose from any one or all of these causes combined, let others determine; but, having heard eleven o'clock strike, I fell fast asleep.

“Nay, I implore you to leave me,” earnestly exclaimed a voice from the outer room, and, starting from my slumber, I half rose from my recumbent position. “I entreat you not to remain here at this hour,” continued Mrs. Gregory, who I concluded had just re-

turned, “you know how late it is, and what will every body, and even the servants think, of my admitting you into the house, when it is nearly twelve o’clock? oh, pray go, do, pray do.”

“Immediately,” replied a voice, not unfamiliar to my ear; but, from whose mouth it proceeded, I could not call to mind—“I will, immediately, to satisfy you, and willingly execute or obey whatever command you may impose on the humblest of your slaves; but, why this inordinate hurry, *now*? No one is aware of my being here, and none of your servants, save the porter, can, by possibility, become enlightened, and I will take sure measures for enjoining silence on *his* part.”

“Oh, yes, yes, they will know it—they must know it,” passionately returned the lady; “Mr. Gregory will hear of it—oh, pray, pray go.”

“But why so anxious to get quit of me this evening, Celestine?” answered the other, whose

voice still evaded detection of the speaker, “this is not the first time, my beautiful angel, that I have experienced the bliss of a tête-à-tête with my adored, aye, and in this very room ; and, if I mistake not, as late as it is now, my Celestine —am I not right, love ?” And, from a trifling sound which followed, I had reason to suppose the conversation was not carried on from opposite corners of the room.

“ Well, well,” was Mrs. Gregory’s reply, disengaging herself, “if I have been weak enough to forget myself so far, surely you are not the person from whose lips I should suffer humiliation by a taunt.”

“ From me ! never ;” cried the impassioned lover—“ rather may all—”

“ Don’t swear about the matter,” interrupted the lady, “ no occasion to swear, at all ; what I beg, implore, and entreat, of you, is to go.”

“ So I will, as I before told you, I *will* go, Celestine, if you desire it, but such moments of superior felicity as this is—to have you here

alone, and to know that, for the time at least, you are all—all mine own—such moments do not occur so frequently as to be carelessly disposed of. You ask too much when you tell me to dash away the cup of ecstasy, when, at the same time, you hold it to my lips. Oh, but you do not speak in earnest—my loved—my beautiful Celestine :” and again I thought the parties had not built a wall between them.

Oh, how I wished the pale-faced Cornet had been where I was, instead of myself—to him it would have afforded the most exquisite delight, whereas to me it was perfect torment. I would willingly have borrowed two thousand pounds more, at any rate of interest old Crosstock chose to name, if permitted to escape. What a predicament for a timid gentleman like me! I’m not sure that I would not have changed my then position for my straw pallet in the Vittoria hospital. What could I do? It was pretty plain that the companion of the lady was no welcome intruder, though it was equally

certain he was any thing but unknown to her. The delay in her return home might have been occasioned by fruitless endeavours to get rid of him—her ignorance of my presence was, probably, owing to the forgetfulness or neglect of the porter—and the anxiety manifested by the lady to get rid of her visitor might be accounted for by the uncertainty under which she laboured as to whether I might not knock at the street door each moment.

These surmises passed rapidly through my brain, yet left me undecided how to act. I was by no means willing to play the part of a spy, and, the circumstance of my having heard thus far of a conversation, which it would not require a conjuror to discover was never intended to reach the ears of a third person, arose from any cause or motive rather than from a desire of becoming an eaves-dropper.

Would it be honourable to remain longer in my place of concealment, and unavoidably become farther acquainted in matters that concerned

me not? Or should I start up, like Richard the Third in the tent scene, and, rushing into the other room, apologise for having fallen asleep, and pretend still to be less than half awake?

The first proposition could not for an instant hold good, even though I should escape detection, and the last must inevitably expose the lady, and ruin her in the eyes of her companion at least, who it was not to be supposed was likely to be deceived by so lame a story.

My situation became truly embarrassing, and as the night wore on, and with it the chances of my arrival became more remote, the supplications for instant departure became less fervent; and I was convinced the period had arrived when it became absolutely necessary to make known my presence.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, for I scarcely know which, I was saved farther consideration on this head, for the gentleman, drawing to one side the silken curtain that divided the two apartments, passed rapidly by the couch where

I reclined, when, as may well be supposed, his progress was instantly arrested.

Had I been the father of all evil, instead of one of his most inferior pupils, my visitor could not have appeared more horror-struck and astonished; but, shortly recovering his faculties, he commenced with the usual exclamation with which I was now so perfectly acquainted that I felt rather astonished when it was not addressed to me, “What, Austin! Why, I thought you were dead?”

“Only asleep, my lord,” I answered, for the perfumed person of Lord Mantar stood before me.

“Strange,” muttered the wondering noble, and, immediately resuming his affected air, which by having thrown aside in his previous dialogue, was probably the cause of my not recognizing him sooner, he deliberately drew on his gloves, and, seizing his hat, approached Mrs. Gregory, who, overcome by the unexpected exposé, was writhing under the pangs of shame and vexation.

“Pardon, Mrs. Gregory, pardon me, I implore you, for my mal-a-propos visit, I perceive I am rather de trop, quite unintentional, ’pon my honour. But, not having had the honour of being acquainted with the circumstance of this gentleman’s existence, much less with his proximity to South Audley Street, I hope to be exempt in your eyes from intentionally forcing my presence upon you, and unfortunately, I fear,” he added, addressing himself to me, “this is the second time I have unwittingly disarranged your amusements—d’ye recollect the shrubbery at the Druid Oak, Mr. Austin? Eh, sweet spot! but I trespass—Celest—that is, Mrs. Gregory, *au revoir*—Mr. Austin, a’dios, as you say in Spain;” and, bowing and smiling like a dancing-master on being paid his salary, his lordship flew down the stairs, and, stirring up the fat porter with half a dozen sharp raps over the shins with his cane, instead of half a dozen sovereigns, as he had previously intended, he soon found himself on the pavé, bursting with ill-concealed rage and disappointment.

But the worst part had yet to come, for the lady, over powered witha paroxysm of passion composed of those potent materials—rage, grief, mortification, and fear, thought fit to add to the interest of the scene by forthwith proceeding to exhibit a series of as well got up hysterics as it ever became my fortune to witness---so exquisitely was the farce enacted that it was great pity the person for whom they were principally intended was not present to partake of the entertainment; but of this the beautiful Celestine was wholly unaware, until, partially recovering from her interesting indisposition, she discovered no one to be in attendance save myself, who was as little versed in the description of restoratives, applicable to the case, as also completely ignorant of the mode most in vogue for administering the same, as I should have been if called on to compose the king's speech at the opening of a session.

When the paucity of the audience was made manifest, it was truly wonderful how the whirl-

wind of sighs and gush of tears were speedily hushed to rest, and immediately dried up---but in place thereof came forth a volley of abuse, such as I was wholly unprepared for.

The invitation to the house having quite slipped the agitated beauty's memory, I was asked how I dared force my way into her private apartments? I was upbraided as a spy---a wretch prowling about to create mischief, and secreting himself in order to ruin the happiness of families, and destroy the honour of unsuspecting victims. All the apparent fondness with which I had been regarded in the morning was now turned into gall, and the lady did not hesitate to inform me of her deep regret that I had not remained where, for the last few months she had supposed me to have resided. If all the crimes which were then and there laid to my charge were settled on the right shoulder, I must undoubtedly have been, both in mind and body, the most awfully deformed and disgusting biped possible; and so terribly hideous, yet

confidently stated, was her enumeration of my sins that I momentarily began to feel less confidence in my innocence, and, at last, seriously examined my foot to discover whether or no the impression of my cloven hoof might not have singed a hole in the delicate Persian carpet whereon I was standing.

No persuasion, flattery, nor condolence appeared to have the slightest effect upon my abusive friend—I had been the means of exposing her conduct—I had for ever alienated Lord Mantar—I had insulted, degraded, and irreparably injured her reputation---the story would, without doubt, reach the ears of her husband---and her character and herself must be for ever and irretrievably ruined. In vain I assured her that the picture which she drew of the unfortunate occurrence was overcharged and exaggerated---in vain I pointed out many reasons for considering it unlikely that Lord Mantar would so far descend from the common rules of honour as to divulge what had transpired; and,

as regarded myself, I solemnly pledged my word that, as far as concerned me, every circumstance was already buried in oblivion. No, it would not do---I was a traitor, a villain, and the lord knows what ; but, if there is any truth in the assertion that two extremes generally meet, I was in a fair way of being retaken into favour, had not a thundering rap at the hall-door put a stop to the upbraidings of the one, and the apologies of the other.

Anxiously and in trembling the lady listened, every emotion of grief and anger was bound up in the now one engrossing and predominant feeling of alarm—speedily we heard footsteps traverse the hall—the stair-case was quickly ascended by a few springs—a hand pressed the handle of the door—it turned—it flew back on its hinges—and the husband of the distressed lady entered the room !

“ Here I am, Celestine,” he commenced in a happy joyous tone, “ back before my time—but what’s this? weeping! in grief! for heaven’s

sake, speak ! has any one dared ?—speak, Celestine---speak---I command you to tell me what is the occasion of these tears ?”

But the person enquired of was not inclined to answer such minute questions—but, as it was necessary to give some explanation of the strange position in which we were placed, she wisely bethought her that a pantomimic display would answer all the purposes of a lengthened oration—she therefore only saw fit to murmur the words, “Mr. Austin,” when she threw herself into the arms of her astounded and legal protector. A second edition of the hysterics now came off, when the distressed state of the sufferer might have justified even a less interested person than Mr. Gregory in making some slight enquiries as to the cause.

It must have been a pretty group for a disinterested observer to gaze at. There stood the husband, fury and jealousy running riot through each line of his countenance, and holding in his arms the apparently insensible form of his frail

partner. From the excitement which the events of the last hour had produced, her cheeks were pale as marble—the large tear-drops coursed each other down her beautiful features,—her hair was dishevelled—her dress disordered, and altogether she presented a picture of woe amply sufficient for the purpose of stirring up the suspicious feelings of any Benedict—while at the further end of the apartment my miserable self waited for a finale to the scene.

Most indisputably appearances were unequivocally against me; and, as the laws of honour peremptorily forbade me to acknowledge the invitation I had received, there was nothing to do but to bear the burnt of the storm as best I might.

“To what, sir, am I indebted for the *honour* of this visit?” enquired Mr. Gregory, laying a strong emphasis on the word *honour*. “This is the second time my wife has been grossly insulted by your unparalleled conduct.”

“You entirely mistake,” I commenced in reply, but was as immediately interrupted.

“Mistake, sir! no, not quite so convenient for your purposes and safety as to *mistake*. My own senses proving too correctly what I behold to be no optical delusion.”

“Calm yourself,” I replied, “the whole originates in a succession of *contrestemps*, which, to be satisfactorily explained, requires nothing beyond being listened to.”

“I begin to fancy,” was the immediate retort, “that you are as equally *au fait* in palliating dishonourable conduct, by means of falsehood, as you are daring and unprincipled when assaulting a defenceless woman. Mistaken indeed! do I not see my wife lying senseless before me, pale, weeping and in convulsions? While you, the author of this daring outrage, have had the intolerable effrontery to plant your foot in my house, for the purpose of insulting a lady, when you well knew there was no man by to resent your cowardly conduct—mean, pitiful scoundrel!!!”

I could stand a good deal of flattery in the

way of complimentary language, and had proved my powers of listening unmoved during my conference with the wife—but, as my services now appeared to be a little overrated, I judged it expedient to check these ebullitions of gratitude, which flowed, as if spontaneously, from the lips of the gentleman, since I knew not but, if the various branches of the family followed in the same strain, I might fall a victim to their overwhelming expressions in my favour.

Modestly therefore declining the honour of assuming to myself the various titles with which he had invested me, I was under the painful necessity of stating that, notwithstanding a few words could have readily set to rights all doubtful appearances, with which circumstances had arrayed the case, yet, since the language which he had been pleased to concoct had found vent from his mouth, as a matter of course all further explanation must cease. I also thought fit to inform him that angry words and abusive language could not benefit his cause; and finally

enquired when I might expect a visit from his friend? Thus, again, was I drawn into a fresh scrape, owing to the white officer's facetiousness; for, had I not been compelled to remain in London to obtain money, I should long since have left the metropolis for home.

There was no one in town to whom I could apply in my present emergency but to Daillie; and though I felt assured that, as far as regarded the knowledge and observance of points of custom and etiquette pertaining to this approved method of abbreviating my existence, his experience and directions would prove most serviceable, yet, had it been possible, I should rather have preferred my request to some older, and consequently more familiar, friend; for it was no trifle I was on the point of soliciting at his hands, since, next in aversion to acting as the principal, in a duel, I think that of appearing in the capacity of second ranks nearest; but the gallant Captain appeared to suffer under no unpleasant sensations whatever on being put

in possession of the circumstances of the dilemma, at least in as far as I thought myself justified in communicating them. For, although the measures which the lady had adopted, to screen her reputation at my expense, were very far from meeting with my unqualified approval, yet it is not to be supposed I felt myself at liberty to divulge what I had accidentally discovered, and what it never could have been intended I should have been made acquainted with.

Moreover it appeared highly problematical that the lady, judging from my evident determination, during the interview, to take the consequences of appearances wholly on my self, without attempting any vindication which might embroil her in its disclosure, would, to the utmost of her ability, endeavour to turn the wrath of her *caro espóso* into some other channel. And surely, thought I, it is a hard case that, because a lady cannot better arrange her parties, so as to prevent the coalition of persons, not

particularly agreeable to each other, that the guests, after having been invited, should on arrival be desired to consider themselves in the light of a target for ball practice, for the especial amusement of her husband.

Many years afterwards it came to my knowledge that the lady *did* use her utmost persuasion, nay sued upon her knees for the abandonment, or even postponement, of her lord and master's intentions—but she might as well have addressed the winds—he was inflexible; and, having thrown out one or two expressions indicative of the surprize her earnest adjuration on behalf of her insulter occasioned, she was fain to desist in her good offices, well knowing that the less information requested, and the shorter the cross-examinations demanded, the greater was her chance of escaping detection: and, after all, was it not far preferable that an idle unmarried man about town, whose trade it was to stand against a shower of balls and bullets, should run the small chance of being

hit by the one little pellet which was the amount of the battery to be discharged against him, and from which the chances were manifold that he would escape unharmed—than that her reputation should suffer, which must inevitably hurl down the same precipice the happiness and honour of many?—most decidedly. So the lady dried her tears, and retired to bed, while I lit my cigar and proceeded to make arrangements for my execution.

With great good humour, Captain Daillie addressed himself to his toilet, and, during the process of robing his person, complimented me highly on my aptitude in getting into a scrape, for, said he—"It was but this morning you assured me you were unaware of the presence of any lady with whom you were acquainted, and now, though but a few hours have intervened, you inform me that not only have you made yourself known, but further than that, have so managed to ingratiate yourself into the good opinion of one of Eve's fair daughters as to

bring down upon your devoted head, the nowise delicate attentions of the exasperated husband."

"'Twas true—'twas pity!" so I could only acknowledge my crime, and, arm in arm, we proceeded to St. James's-street; yet I took advantage of the period occupied in our walk to inform my friend that I wholly disclaimed having the honour of holding that high position in the lady's favour with which her spouse seemed so extremely anxious, though contrary to my desire, to invest me; and, moreover, I entreated that, during the interview with Mr. Gregory's second, it might be fully explained that, denying the imputation which his conduct inferred, and, considering myself the aggrieved party, in place of the criminal one, I did not purpose going out (if go out I must) with the sole and exclusive intention of allowing my opponent to wound my body, in the hope that such perforation might mend his honour—far from it; and, I requested Captain Daillie would bear in

mind the necessity of fully explaining that, for every shot which Mr. Gregory thought proper to amuse himself with at *my* expense, most indisputably I should demand, at *least*, a similar gratification at his.

This being clearly and definitively arranged, we soon reached our destination; and, the friend of my adversary having previously arrived, a private room was ready wherein to discuss this, to me, knotty, and momentous, point.

Having seen my *fidus Achates* enter the precincts of what, to myself was, of course, forbidden ground, I had no resource but to wander up and down the now almost deserted street, until Daillie should be enabled to rejoin me, when the conference between the seconds was ended.

I had taken some three or four dozen turns along the silent pavement, when I observed two figures emerge from out the portals of the building where the consultation so interesting to

myself had been carried on. My promenade was instantly arrested; and, with no little anxiety, I watched the proceedings of the two black objects in the distance. For a few seconds they appeared to be still engaged in the conversation which employed their attention when leaving the house; but, speedily raising their hats from their heads, like a General officer of the olden time when receiving a salute, and, after a well executed inclination of the body, which would have done credit to Oscar Byrne, they replaced the coverings on the summit of their frames, and each went his way rejoicing---at least, I can vouch for the merry mood of one of the party, and that was no other than Captain Daillie, for, as if fully satisfied with the way in which he had concluded the negociation of the affair entrusted to him, he rushed at me with outstretched hands, and uttered a volley of congratulations.

“Give you joy, Austin—give you joy, my

dear fellow—all settled—Chalk Farm—eight o'clock—coffee—we'll have coffee first—best thing in the world—steels the nerves—steadies the hand—clears the eye—capital thing, coffee, on these occasions.”

“But who is to act as Mr. Gregory's second?” I enquired; “and what passed at the interview?”

“Oh, as for what passed,” said my friend, “I took care there should not be any unnecessarily prolonged conversation for that matter—quite the reverse, my dear friend; for, no sooner did we commence proceedings than I found my brother ambassador was more inclined for peace than war.”

“Was he?” I exclaimed, not feeling very particularly sorry at hearing it.

“Indeed was he,” answered my second, “so I soon set him to rights on that head.”

“Well done, Daillie,” I replied; “I thought he'd come to his senses. So he didn't want to fight, eh?”

"Not he, I assure you," was the answer; "he seemed to hate a pistol as much as I do a sponging house. He tried all tacks."

"Why, what did he say? but, first of all, you forget I'm still unacquainted with his name."

"Oh, ah, true," said the Captain; "his name is Sir Henry Stivers, and, it would seem, from what he gathered from his principal, that, in his opinion, you were not so much to blame as Mr. Gregory fancied."

"Precisely so," I chimed in, "that's exactly what I told you."

"And exactly what I repeated to Sir Henry," answered Daillie.

"Well, go on," I continued, "what did he say, then?"

"Why, he said—but, upon my word," added the Captain, breaking off the thread of his story, "I can't to a nicety tell you what he *did* say, or rather what he was going to say, for, seeing no occasion for unnecessary

dialogues, I took upon myself to cut short his oration."

"Very well," I replied, "I suppose you were satisfied, and anxious to avoid all useless disquisition."

"To be sure I was," answered my companion; "and, when the Baronet hinted that he felt confident some mistake had occasioned the whole of the present annoyances, of course I acknowledged the correctness of his surmise, and begged to wave all further excuses and observations on his part."

"Then the thing 's all settled;" I rejoined.

"All—every thing—and further negociation at an end."

"But," continued I, "what did you mean just now by Chalk Farm---eight o'clock---coffee ---and so on?"

"What! don't you know," returned the Lancer, "that Chalk Farm is the accustomed place of meeting?"

"Of course I do," was my reply; "but didn't

you say this moment that you had satisfactorily arranged the whole business?"

"So I have," said Daillie, "and without giving you the least trouble whatever."

"I'm extremely obliged," was my rejoinder, "and owe a long debt of thanks to you for your great kindness on the occasion; so let us adjourn to some place or other, and order supper; for your agreeable information, coupled with the cold night air, have fully confirmed me in a vague suspicion which, half an hour existed within myself, of being hungry."

"You 're right, my dear fellow," exclaimed Daillie, "eat a good supper---can't be the worse for that---but don't drink---be careful what wine you swallow; and, above all, eschew punch and liqueurs."

"Oh, as for that," I replied, laughingly, "I'm not afraid of any of those great enemies of the human race; as yet, they have treated me marvellously kindly, and I find my head not a whit the worse for their overnight companionship."

"But it may unsteady your hand in the morning," he added, "my friend; and, recollect, that 's no trifle, as much depends on the way of holding your instrument."

"Nonsense, man," interrupted I, "do you mean I shan't be able to shave?"

"Upon my word, Austin," answered the other, "you take the thing as coolly as I could wish—perhaps you 're an old hand at it?"

"At what?" I asked, "at shaving?"

"At shaving?" echoed Daillie, "no, at fighting."

"Not in particular," I replied; "though I may have had some small experience in that way;" and the whole scene of the slaughter at Selby passed freshly over my recollection.

"So be it," said my second; "I'll go anywhere---do any thing you please---but you must to bed soon, for remember, at eight you 're to be on the ground."

"What ground do you allude to?" I asked, "and why at eight?"

"Why, have'nt I told you that Chalk Farm is the place, and eight the hour fixed on?" rather pettishly observed my friend.

"What, then!" I exclaimed, not a little amazed, "do you mean, after all, that I'm to fight?"

"Why, who the devil did you think was going to fight for you?" shouted the Lancer, his wrath now rapidly rising.

"But didn't you tell me that all was settled?" was my enquiry, not much fancying the new light about to be thrown on the subject.

"And so it is all settled, that you're to meet to-morrow at eight---Chalk Farm---coffee---pistols---all---every thing arranged."

"But, my dear Daillie, did I understand you when you said Sir Henry Stivers wanted to apologize?"

"So he did," rejoined the Lancer; "but, of course, I wouldn't let him."

"The deuce you would not---why not?" I enquired.

"Why not?" said Daillie, slowly repeating my words, "do you suppose I was to get out of my bed, and run about this cold town, with devil a one to air the streets but the watchmen, for nothing? and, besides which, didn't you impress upon me that, if your antagonist fired at you, that the compliment was to be returned? and did not you say, moreover, so far from Mr. Gregory being the aggrieved party, and you the side aggrieving, that the matter was entirely the contrary way? and, last of all, how could I accept an apology, when you declined letting me know what the act was for which it was to be given? Oh, nonsense, my dear fellow, I've engaged to bring you to the post tomorrow, and so to the post you must go.

"Very well," I replied, "if I must, of course, there's no use in repining and bothering myself about it---so let's to bed."

"Why, I thought," added my companion, "you wanted supper a few minutes back, you have not lost your appetite, I hope?"

"Thank you," I replied, drily, "I don't feel hungry at present;" and, determined not to notice the smile on Daillie's countenance, in silence we returned to our abode.

## CHAPTER VII.

"In case you happen to be killed, have you any particular directions to leave relative to the disposal of your remains?" Enquired Daillie on the following morning, while journeying in his curricle in the direction of Chalk Farm—"because if you have, my dear fellow, now's your time, for it only wants ten minutes to eight."

Such a question, even when addressed by a lawyer, on making out a rough sketch of your will, strikes rather harshly on the ear, but when spoken with the utmost nonchalance, some ten or twenty minutes prior to the probability of your being shot, grates most particularly unpleasant on the auricular nerve; and the cold

foggy atmosphere of a London December, at so early an hour in the morning, tends but in a very small degree to exhilarate the spirits.

So thick and substantial was the icy mist that even objects within a short distance were difficult to be discerned with accuracy, a circumstance which, my friend informed me, was highly favourable to the accomplishment of the object in hand, since there was not a sufficiency of fog to obscure the view of my opponent's outline—yet, at the same time, there would be no other visible object to distract my attention.

This was very satisfactorily, truly; but although I made no comment on the information thus afforded, it struck me that if any great benefit was to accrue to me individually, by reason of the state of the atmosphere, such advantage must unavoidably be shared in common with my adversary, in consequence whereof I could not so plainly discern any great cause for rejoicing on my part; but, as my friend appeared to think otherwise, it was not necessary

to damp his pleasure, especially on an occasion where too much hilarity is not often the prevailing annoyance.

Individually I experienced a sensation akin to any thing rather than merriment, and, as I traced all my misfortunes to the one source, my benedictions on the pale-faced Cornet ‘fell thick as hail;’ for, added to my other miseries and dilemmas, already recounted, I was now about to fight a duel with a man whom I never quarrelled with, and could not have engendered the slightest animosity against; and even should I escape from this ordeal, which within a quarter of an hour it seemed more than probable I should have to pass through, how was it possible for me to foretell, or in any way calculate upon, the many dangers and vexations which might still remain in store! How devoutly I wished the Cornet in my place—but wishing did not retard our progress, and, after a few seconds occupied in further reflections, Daillie informed me it was time to descend. So, divesting our-

selves of our wet clammy outer garments, we walked onward towards the place appointed for the rencontre.

Having left the high road, and quitted the lanes branching from it, we traversed a slippery muddy pathway, across two fields, at the end of which I was assured was the spot fixed on for the exhibition ; but had I not had a guide, and one so conversant with the localities as my friend, I might have wandered about in the fog for a century, before I could have discovered the place of rendezvous. But Daillie was no novice, and the confidence with which he threaded his way proclaimed his thorough knowledge of the premises.

“ Here we are, Austin,” said my companion, “ not more than one hundred yards farther, and then we’ll set to work—but don’t forget to aim low—whatever you do, aim low—mark that. Even should your ball hit the ground it may rebound and mark him, but if you fire over his head, no chance of such luck coming to pass.

Cursed damp, is'nt it? My dear fellow, don't forget, whatever you do, to keep your eye steadily on him, that is if you *can* see him in this infernal fog—good thing the fog, though—always like a fog on these occasions. Don't you feel hungry, Austin? This air and exercise would create an appetite in a skeleton—but look there—don't you see them? Sure enough that's them---now for it."

Straining my eyes in the direction pointed out by the Captain, I at last discovered divers figures moving about, as indistinct and questionable as Shakespeare's ghosts in Macbeth, but, as we soon discovered, somewhat more substantial.

"Austin!" exclaimed my friend earnestly, "by Jove, we are not the only ones this morning bent on a shooting excursion---very annoying that---however, can't be helped---must shift our ground, I suppose, if both sides of the other party have arrived before us. But let's see, how many are there?"

"Six, as well as I can make out," was my reply.

"Six," echoed the Captain, "then all's right. I suppose Gregory, his friend, and the doctor are three---the others not having as yet made up their number---we are of course entitled to the ground, and, if we get our affair over speedily, we may chance to see the next---that is, those who survive, of course---ah, here they come." And, issuing from the obscure coterie, two individuals advanced, but, as the decreasing distance between us diminished the doubt as to their identity, we discovered a couple of persons very different from Mr. Gregory and Sir Henry Stivers, whose society we had travelled thus far to enjoy.

One of the advancing gentlemen was habited in a pair of dark corduroy breeches, having a profusion of bunches of tape and ribbon affixed to the outside of each knee, which multiplicity of bindings aided and abetted in supporting a pair of large brick-dust coloured top boots the

feet of which were large and heavy enough to have Macadamized more stones in an hour than all the sinners at Brixton could accomplish in a year. He was large and portly in person, to make which the more evident he had clothed himself outwardly in a huge, rough, white coat, somewhat resembling a blanket, and on the shaggy wool of which the damp hung in small brilliant particles, as you may sometimes see on the back of a Newfoundland dog when first emerging from an aquatic libation. Round his neck was bound an enormous belcher handkerchief of many colours, which, enveloping his chin in its ample fold, twined itself round and round the throat of its owner as a boa constrictor is said to embrace its victim, till its course was arrested immediately under the bright variegated nose, forming the principal feature of this gentleman's face. On his head appeared a low-crowned hat of enormous and disproportionate expanse of brim; and altogether he looked as unlike my gentlemanly opponent, or the elegant

baronet, as it was possible for two extremes to be.

The dress of the other person, who closely followed in the wake of the former, differed but in some trifling and immaterial points from the first; and, in whatever genus the leader might have been classed, it was palpably evident that the same description was applicable to each.

"Captain," commenced the voice from within the capacious folds of the neckcloth, "how d'ye do, Captain—did n't expect to see me and my pal here, at this time o'day, I warrant? but, howsomever you see as how things will out sometimes, Captain, as the terrier said to the badger when he draw'd him."

"What, Grabum!" loudly exclaimed Daillie, "What the devil brings you here?"

"Small matter of business, Captain, as the hangman said to the culprit, when he fitted the halter."

"By heavens! I don't understand it---who gave information?" inquired the gallant officer.

"That's tellings, Captain, as the informer said when he hanged his mother," replied the other.

"Come, Grabum, like a good fellow," coaxingly rejoined Daillie, "here's a five pound note for old acquaintance sake, only just tell me who the cursed rascal was, this is not the first time we've met, you know that, Grabum?"

"True, Captain, I've seen you afore now, as the tread-mill said to the pickpocket, nevertheless duty's duty; and you knows, as well as I does, that it ar'nt my business to peach, I knows a trick worth two of that, and, after all, may be I can't tell who gived the information—may be I can; but howsomever that's neither here nor there, as the man said of his wife's good temper---so d'ye see, Captain, there's no good chaffing about it."

"Not much, truly," replied Daillie, "but where are the other gentlemen?"

"Quiet enough now, as the chap said when he cut the old woman's head off," was the answer.

"Well, Grabum," exclaimed my friend, "at least you'll allow me to speak to them?"

"With all my heart, Captain, but don't be long about it, as the bride said to the parson, cause as how I'm tarnation cold and hungry, and it's full time as we was a jogging, for I see no fun in this here; as the prig said, when he stood in the pillory."

My second accordingly advanced to the conference, and was immediately accosted by Sir Henry Stivers, when, after mutual expressions of astonishment, as to how the arrangements could have become so far public as to have enabled any person to give information of our intended proceedings, it was decided that no particle of suspicion of our *disappointment* having originated either in the principals or seconds could exist; and, to make doubly sure, the four persons most interested in the business willingly pledged their honours to that effect.

To attempt carrying the "little affair" through in presence of three Bow-street officers would

have been ridiculous, even had it been in any degree feasible, which however it was not; for the three gentlemen alluded to, in order to set that question finally at rest, pointed out a few similarly appareled individuals, who, they assured us, were always left by Mr. Grabum as a sort of reserve, in case of his finding the influence of his warrant, backed as its presentation invariably was with elegant and appropriate similes, insufficient to carry his instructions into effect, without the aid of the corporeal arm of the law.

Under these circumstances, nothing remained but to deliver ourselves up at the Police office, then and there to have our cases taken into the consideration of probably not the wisest and most courteous of God's creatures upon earth.

"That's right, gentlemen," vociferated Mr. Grabum, on seeing an inclination manifested on the part of all concerned to adjourn, "that's all right, the worst of the business is ended---

and now it's all down-hill work, as Mr. Sadler said, when he fell out of the balloon."

On pledging our words that no attempt at hostilities should be made by either party, we were permitted to return to town unaccompanied by Mr. Grabum and his friends, and, as in honour bound, between ten and eleven o'clock, we made our appearance before the officiating mass of wisdom condensed into one solid ball and deposited in the scull of Mr. Nonnant.

"Are these the offending parties against whom the information was laid?" pompously inquired the magistrate, on our appearing before him, and, at the same time, running his eye quickly round the group.

"Yes, your worship," answered a thin, greasy looking thing, called by the presiding dignitary a clerk.

"Who apprehended these people?" asked the bench.

"Me! your worship, as the chap said when the man asked who he owed money to," sang

out the melodious tones of Mr. Grabum's voice.

"Very well, Grabum, you're an intelligent and meritorious officer, always extremely diligent and active :" whereupon Mr. Grabum made divers attempts to emerge his chin from its imprisonment, as if desirous of developing the satisfaction which suffused his entire countenance.

"Did you find them in the act of committing a breach of the peace, Grabum ?" inquired Mr. Nonnant.

"Summit near it, your worship, they was just agoing to begin, and no mistake, as Boneyparte said at Salamanca, when he seed Lord Wellington a running after him."

"Well, gentlemen," said the magistrate, "I presume you are well acquainted with the reasons for appearing before me on this occasion ?"

"We can tolerably surmise," replied the baronet. "But you will greatly oblige me by putting us in possession of the name of the party who lodged the information."

"Don't doubt it in the least, sir—dare say you would," continued the man in power, "in order, I suppose, that he likewise should be called upon to satisfy what, in fashionable jargon, you call honour."

"I presume," sharply retorted the other, "that we were not forcibly arrested and brought up here for the exclusive purpose of furnishing an opportunity for an exhibition of elocution, since, if such *is* the case, I for one decline making part of the audience."

"Your remarks, sir," answered the Justice, highly exasperated, "and the tone in which you have just uttered them, are, to say the least, uncalled for and extremely offensive; and," here his worship began to wax warm, "allow me to observe that a repetition of such insulting behaviour will most assuredly call down upon the perpetrator an order for committal—sir, d'ye mark that? Perhaps you think, because you're a baronet, sir, that your words and inuendoes will pass without animadversion; but, I'll give

you to understand, sir, that in this place, that is, as long as *I* fill the chair, mere rank shall never claim difference of treatment at my hands ; no, sir, never ; I consider all ranks, sects, and persuasions, as equal.” And there was every prospect of the whole of our party being incarcerated in one of the secure private apartments belonging to the establishment, had not my friend Daillie, unperceived by the magistrate, intimated to his acquaintance, Mr. Grabum, that the period had arrived for his interference, and, to do that individual justice, notwithstanding the anxiety which he showed in bringing about our interview with his superior, yet he seemed the very reverse of wishing our freedom to be further circumscribed ; and, confident in his own oratorical powers, together with the privileged license of a necessary, and therefore highly useful, inferior, he boldly stepped forth and accosted Mr. Nonnant.

“I axes your worship’s pardon for obtruding, but, as your worship very correctly says, there’s

no difference of sexes here, and therefore it isn't to be argued, for an instant, that, because a gentleman has had the misfortune to become a barrow-knight, that he's to take upon himself to come for to go for to flounder about, as if he was the lord mayor's footman in livery. No, no, certainly not, your worship, that wont do—people must stick in their places, as the officer said to the soldier, when he was tired and wanted to go home. But the matter of that there is neither more nor less than this here. When I went to take these gentlemen, instead of making a tarnation blundering and row, as some on'em sometimes does when they sees they're safe, off they comes along of me and my pall as quietly as possible, though to be sure they looked at me when I grabbed them, as much as to say, I'm blowed, if I'm as fond of you as you seems of me, as the cake said to the school-boy; but then your worship knows I'm not considered generally the most pop'lar character what is. But I can't help that — know me better, like

me more, as the fox said to the turkey poult, as he could not reach at;—so, your worship, you sees that, as these ere gentlemen behaved civilly at the beginning, may be I can take upon myself to promise they'll behave genteely to the last, so that their feelings may be spared the agonization of the lock-up; for, as your worship knows, all living creatures have got feeling, as the lobster said to the cook, when she was a biling him."

"True, true," replied the magistrate, "I don't wish to incommod them more than can be helped; so, Grabum, if you guarantee their silence, possibly I may allow them to remain where they are, until the arrival of the bail."

Thus, through the intercession of Mr. Grabum, we were spared the infliction of the lock-up, and permitted to witness further instances of the worthy magistrate's impartiality and excellent judgment in the disposal of divers cases brought before him.

Bail had been sent for, when on our road to

the office, for my companions, far more experienced than myself, well knew the almost certain finale to the invitation, from the man in power, to attend him.

Eventually we were bound over to keep the peace for six months in two hundred pounds each, and a couple of householders had the honour of appearing for every one at the forfeit of half that amount. There was a considerable degree of signing and feeing, and at length we were permitted to depart. But, the moment the edict for our discharge had irrevocably gone forth, Daillie approached the man of power, and, as if he had known him for ages, requested the pleasure of his society at dinner.

“Delighted to see you, at eight, old Nonnant, if that hour suits you, only a few friends—two Blenheims and a poodle—champagne in ice—no inconvenience to me, none whatever,” he continued, seeing the persecuted about to speak, “happy to mount you, if you’ll come earlier—send carriage to take you up—set you home—

do anything for you—love you greatly—do 'pon my honour—quite an original—best bear I ever met—”

“Turn these people out *instantly*,” vociferated the enraged receiver of the public money, “turn them out of the office *instantly*,” and forthwith divers brawny hands were applied to our shoulders, and we hurried through the passage with most miraculous rapidity.

“Not long about that, as the snail said when the garden roller crushed him,” murmured Mr. Grabum, as we flew into the street; and, with merely a formal bow exchanged between the adverse parties, the intended actors of a probable tragedy had no option but to return home, loudly and unasked for, lamenting their intentions having terminated in nothing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

How, and by whom the kind intentions of Mr. Gregory towards myself had been discovered, I was wholly at a loss to conjecture ; but my friend Daillie positively assured me that, in similar cases, it would be at variance with all precedent were I to seek a renewal of hostilities : in fact, said he, " If you are most anxious to meet him, the only method is to appoint some place of assignation abroad, and, circumstanced as this country at present is, you may probably experience difficulty in so doing. But, since you persevere in stating that your opponent's jealousy has no real and substantial foundation whatever, and farther, when we re-

flect that you are not the person demanding satisfaction, but merely the object destined some few hours back to afford the same, for the special gratification of your acquaintances ; I hold that, in the estimation of all men, you are perfectly justified in dropping the matter at this period, unless, indeed, you receive intimation from the other party, announcing their difference of opinion on the point, in which case, of course, you must obey the summons be it where it may."

I had already been detained in London long beyond the period I had at first assigned for my visit, but the reasoning of my ally was so convincing that I felt imperatively bound to delay my departure not only on that paramount account, but likewise because the final settlement with Jonathan Brownley and Crosstock, as already detailed, had not as yet been effected.

Patience and resignation, therefore, were my only resources, and on them I was compelled to draw largely, for Daillie declared that four-and-twenty hours was the shortest period I

could afford my enemies time for concocting a second edition of defiance; and, unfortunately, it wanted something beyond that period to enable the usurers to scrape the sum together which they had promised to produce.

Thus convinced, I was resolved, as far as in me laid, to banish all disagreeable reflections, and heroically determined to make the most of the short period of enjoyment which possibly might fall to my share.

While revolving this sapient determination in my mind, I had taken the Morning Post from the table, much to the annoyance of a certain stout gentleman, who was particularly anxious to peruse the Journal, and who, meanwhile, was toasting at the fire the opposite side of his body to that which you generally look at for the purpose of recognition.

Doubtless the stout gentleman in question was of opinion that, from the stedfast gaze which I fixed on the columns, I then and there devoured information which was to me of the greatest importance, but nothing could be fur-

ther from the fact; for, although my eye steadily rested on the well arranged lines of black and white, not one particle of the information therein contained found its way beyond the unconscious gaze which I bestowed on it, until my eye caught the momentous article, headed the “Gazette,” at which sight my faculties speedily returned to their proper channel, and the intended duel, and all its concomitant annoyances, passed from my mind.

It was a long, a terribly long Gazette, as in truth most Gazettes were in those days, when a man appeared in them probably twice in a twelvemonth; to wit, on his appointment, and again on his death; and, if particularly fortunate, instead of the latter, he might witness his promotion. As for me, I had already appeared three times, viz., on appointment, on promotion, and on my decease; but I was destined to figure once more—for, glancing my eye over the page, I read,

“—Light Dragoons, to be Captain without purchase, Lieutenant Harry Austin, from

the ---th Hussars, vice — Wonald, killed in action.”

Thus was His Royal Highness’s kind promise fulfilled ; and, though I was removed from my old regiment, which was far from gratifying, at first sight, yet I had obtained promotion, and fortunately without paying for the same, at a time when, under the influence of my evil genius, I was compelled to borrow money at an awful loss, merely to supply the common necessities of life.

The next step to be followed was an application for leave ; and, as the regiment was at home, I rightly anticipated that little or no opposition would be offered to my request, in which opinion I was happily confirmed by an official communication to the effect that my valuable services could be dispensed with at present.

Hour succeeded hour, and not a line or word reach me from Mr. Gregory, or his friend. My transaction with the money-lenders was accomplished ; nothing now remained to retard my

departure ; and, judging it more than probable I should find my mother at the house of the old Guadaloupe General, to the mansion of the latter I accordingly bent my way. What my reception might be, I more than surmised, from the persevering silence and evident neglect with which I had been treated ; and, angry and annoyed as I felt at the marked unkindness of my uncle, it is extremely doubtful whether I should have troubled him with my presence, on that, or any future occasion, had not an attraction existed within his walls far more powerful than the influence which he obtained over his guests by the oft-repeated story of Port Royal.

Although the name of my lovely cousin Mary has not often appeared in these pages, it is not to be supposed that the recollection of her had been equally absent from my mind—far from it. But why should I recount the various feelings that alternately possessed my bosom during that long absence ? Not a letter—not even a line had I received ; could any misfortune have happened ? Was it possible

that illness prevented the communication? surely I should have been apprised of it through some channel, had such been the case. Might not the letters have miscarried, or might not a thousand things have occurred, which it would be useless and impossible for me to guess at? From whom were the letters which I thrust into the breast of my jacket on the morning of Vittoria? I remembered having caught a glimpse of the hand-writing of Jephson, but might there not have been one from Mary? It was not probable that I should have failed in recognising an epistle from my fair cousin. Perhaps the omission was predetermined—my uncle might be offended—but at what remained equally a mystery—but Mary! my own beautiful Mary, surely *she* had not turned against me. No, impossible; but this state of anxious doubt was far more dreadful than the certainty of the worst could have been. And, as there existed no means of solving the enigma so certain as by applying to the fountain head, to the fountain head I was determined to go; and, long before

I had arrived at a satisfactory conclusion as to the best method of commencing operations when in presence of the General, I was nearly pitched out of the front window of the carriage by the driver's suddenly pulling up at the hall steps of the old officer's abode.

The general, I was informed, was from home; and as the servant who answered the summons was a stranger to my person, I requested to be shown into a room, where I might wait until his master returned. In accordance therewith, I was taken into the old gentleman's study, the walls of which were abundantly decorated with views of Guadaloupe---the Bay of Port Royal, representations of the Quebec, Blanche, and Ceres frigates, a model of the Rose, a full length portrait of Sir Charles Grey ; and busts, casts, and miniatures of General Collet, Sir John Jervis, and Dundas.

At one end of the apartment was a door standing half opened, which communicated with a drawing-room, wherein visitors were generally ushered when a morning visit of empty ceremony

and form was the object of their arrival. The servant had hardly retired when I heard voices in the adjoining apartment, and, looking in the direction of the sound, I beheld my cousin deeply engaged in conversation with some gentleman whose back was towards me. What the subject was that interested the beautiful girl so deeply I did not hear—nor indeed was I at all inclined for a second edition of the South Audley street development. This time, at all events, I was resolved to make my presence known ; and moreover it was with no very placid feeling I contemplated the intellectual and lovely countenance of my cousin upturned towards the face of the other with an expression evincing the deepest interest in the details of the communication which he was pouring into her ear. There was a shade of melancholy across her brow which, when last we met, was still a stranger to that fair forehead ; and whatever the subject might have been on which the gentleman descended, it was clear that his auditor received it with as much sorrow as surprize.

My determination was speedily taken ; and, having made the foregoing observations in a space of time considerably shorter than I have occupied in explaining them, I walked directly into the drawing-room.

When the ghost of the Commandant went to sup with Giovanni, he could not have caused a greater sensation than my unlooked for appearance at first created. The noise of my approach interrupted the tête-à-tête ; and the speaker, suddenly turning round, disclosed the features of the object of my fixed aversion, Lord Mantar. If he appeared astonished at beholding a man whom he thought dead, stalking about Mrs. Gregory's boudoir at a most unseasonable hour, he was now considerably more so ; and so difficult did he find all attempts to achieve an unconcerned deportment that his very efforts to bring about such a consummation only further betrayed the failure of the attempt. As for my cousin, the eloquent blood mantled and retired from her countenance as rapidly as it could rush through the veins. In the first

impulse of surprise she had risen from her seat —her eyes were rivetted upon mine—my name imperceptibly escaped her lips—and her hand was half extended to greet my arrival. Passing the astonished noble, I almost ran towards my cousin, but my wonder was nearly on a par with hers when I found the small hand, which I had supposed it was intended I should clasp, withdrawn from the half offered position, and now reposing by her side. No indication whatever appeared on her part of exchanging with me even the common courtesies of an acquaintance, much less the affectionate welcome of a relative. Her face was now as pale as the whitest marble, contrasting sadly with the dark habiliments of deep mourning in which she was arrayed. She was as beautiful, if not *more* beautiful than ever. Her form had now moulded into the full loveliness of woman, and if the indignant glance which her bright eyes cast upon me indicated a feeling of resentment, a tear that trembled on the silken lash pleaded strenuously in extenuation of the offence—but

what that offence was to me remained unknown.

“Mary,” I exclaimed, as soon as I could find utterance to address her, “what can be the cause of this extraordinary and distant reception of one for whom, until now, I foolishly persuaded myself you entertained some slight feeling of regard? It was not thus we were accustomed to meet after long absence; and now, above all times, when I most need the kindness of my friends, why am I so coldly treated by that one of my relations whose good opinion, you well know, I am most anxious to conciliate?” And again I attempted to take her hand, but it was a failure.

More than once my cousin tried to speak, but the rising tears and painful emotions which, uncalled for, *would* arise, denied her utterance—therefore, taking advantage of the lull, Lord Mantar, who by this time had somewhat repaired his self-possession, essayed to form the connecting link which was wanting in the conversation.

“’Pon honour, Mr. Austin,” commenced the Baron, “you must be blessed with a patent

locomotive machine — here to-day — there to-morrow — always busy — lady's boudoir one evening — lady's drawing-room next morning — always hid — quite incog. Good couch — snug place — rose-coloured curtains — eh — you understand — always drop in quite apropos — always."

"My Lord," I replied, "to me it matters little whether my presence be apropos to your wishes, or the reverse — possibly the latter, as has been the case before. But, as I have already said, *that* is of but very small moment with me; but that my appearance in my uncle's house should be the reverse of welcome to this lady is indeed a source of the deepest mortification; and how so sudden a revulsion can have taken place in the opinions of a family where I was always treated as a son and brother, I, of course, know not; but, rather than incommodate Miss Austin by my intrusion, I will instantly withdraw, if, indeed, such be her desire; but from my uncle I must and will learn the cause of this unaccountable conduct. Mary," I continued, "is it your wish that I should retire?"

"Oh, no, not my wish," exclaimed the agitated girl, "but, indeed Harry---I mean Mr. Austin---it would have been better had this painful interview been spared us."

"In Heaven's name," I cried, "what do you allude to? Why should this interview be more painful than hundreds that have preceded it? On the contrary, I looked forward to seeing you again with an anticipation of happiness, which makes my disappointment doubly distressing."

"I dare say it does," chimed in Lord Mantar, "but can't be helped, impossible---however, Mr. Austin, as you cannot fail in perceiving the evident reluctance with which this lady witnesses your intrusion, possibly," opening the door with the most perfect sang-froid—"you'll have the kindness to vacate."

The presence of my cousin was the only bar towards the accomplishment of an intimate connection between the stick which I carried in my hand and the well rounded shoulders of the Baron; and, before I could so far controul my

anger as to speak without passion, the stout figure of my uncle entered the apartment.

"So you have condescended to honour my poor mansion with your presence at last, sir," commenced the Guadalupe hero. "New friends come in—old friends go out—that's your maxim, I presume now, sir? 't was n't so in ninety-four, though! I should like to know what Sir Charles Grey, or any of those gallant fellows would have said of a man who reported himself dead, merely to enable him to carry on his vicious dissipation without interference—eh?" And the old gentleman laid so much emphasis on his words, and so pointedly directed his conversation to myself, that it was impossible not to see against whom he was speaking.

"Surely," I replied, "you cannot mean for an instant to accuse *me* of any such conduct?"

"You must be the best judge yourself," was the angry answer, "whether it is applicable to your case; but, allow me to inform you that I perfectly recollect an officer having been brought to a court-martial for nearly a similar transgres-

sion. It was the evening of the day when we set sail from the Bay of Port Royal. All hands had just—”

“ My dear sir,” I energetically exclaimed, interrupting what I well knew would otherwise prove an interminable story, “ I can assure you that no similarity can exist between my case and that of the officer whom you are about to quote ; and, if you would but allow me to explain matters, it is impossible that my statement can prove otherwise than satisfactory to you.”

“ Satisfactory, sir,” rejoined my uncle, “ how can it prove satisfactory ? did you not spread a report of your death—refuse to reply to any of the letters addressed to you, thereby giving every encouragement for the belief—have not your cousin and myself mourned for you as a near and dear relative—your mother has been brought to the verge of the grave at your supposed death. And now, sir, even at this moment, am not I, my daughter, and the household wearing these trappings of woe which, until the

arrival of Lord Mantar, we regarded as the mere outward and inefficient emblem of that grief which we so truly and so deeply felt. But now, sir, our eyes are opened, and we despise the meanness which could purchase the continuation of vicious pleasures at the expense of agony and wretchedness, which your conduct has heaped upon the heads of your relations."

"My dear uncle," I commenced, the first moment I could seize, when he was physically compelled to stop from sheer want of breath, "I entreat you to listen; and you, Mary, surely you, who have known me from my childhood, cannot think me capable of the gross and unmanly conduct which your father lays to my charge; moreover, what object could I have? What advantage could I derive?"

"That unfortunate nun whom you lured from her convent, and then forsook, can probably answer that question; if indeed, the poor broken-hearted creature exists," replied the irascible gentleman.

"What nun? What broken-hearted crea-

ture?" I almost shouted, at hearing such unjustifiable charges; "are you all mad, or determined to make me so by your absurd statements? I know no nun—I deny having in any way given my countenance to the report of my death, further than by very nearly performing that last act in reality. I come home worn out by wounds and suffering, and I meet anger and false accusations at every turn."

"One question, Mr. Austin, and I have done," said the Guadalupe warrior, with a calmness the very reverse of his former impetuosity, "I will take the liberty of asking one question, with your permission, and then I have done."

"Certainly," was my answer, "and readily will I reply."

"Then allow me to enquire how long you have been in London without condescending to inform your relatives of your existence?"

"Upwards of a week—but, my dear uncle, there is much to explain."

"My dear nephew," ironically chimed in the General, "I firmly believe there *is* much to ex-

plain ; but, as the story regarding Mrs. Gregory and yourself, and the duel with her husband—which latter part of the business redounds as little to your credit as the former one—cannot prove either amusing or instructive to my daughter, I must request it may be dispensed with ; indeed I presume there is little further to be stated, after the full particulars with which Lord Mantar has kindly furnished us.”

“Then to Lord Mantar,” I enquired, “am I indebted for the circulation of these reports?”

“To Lord Mantar, sir ;” said my uncle, with a slow and stately formality, “to Lord Mantar am *I* indebted for putting an end to the farce which, for too long, has been carried on.”

“By Heavens !” I cried, “this is too bad—all and every one appears to conspire against me ; and, if you will not listen to me, calmly and dispassionately listen—no hope remains of my being able to undeceive you.”

“Not much, certainly,” simpered his Lordship, who had preserved an unbroken silence during the dialogue.

Here then was something whereon to vent my rage, and fully did the officiousness of the Baron merit interruption ; but the presence of the General and my cousin rendered the time somewhat inopportune, therefore, stifling my indignation for the moment, I again turned to the General. “ For the many and great kindnesses which I have received from you since the days of my childhood, I am deeply and very grateful ; and, to become estranged from those whom we have been accustomed to love and respect is painful in the extreme ; but, if such is to be my lot, I shall, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that my own conduct has neither called for, nor merited, the infliction. A variety of untoward circumstances have arisen, which may afford a colouring of truth to the numerous accusations with which it seems I am loaded ; but, in all their principal features they are wholly and essentially untrue. I can now guess what you alluded to when you spoke of the abduction of a nun.”

“ I’ve not the least doubt but you can,” said

his Lordship, emboldened by the silence with which I had received his former piquant remark. But *his* time had not come yet, so, taking no notice of the interruption, I continued—"Yet, if the story in any way alludes to that which I am conversant with, I suspect your version will require to be abundantly shorn of its luxuriant excrescences, before it can in any way assimilate to truth."

"Don't trouble yourself, Mr. Austin, in attempting a justification," remarked my uncle; "of course, you are your own master, and the director of your own actions; but I never thought the name of my family could be coupled with the appellation of a swindler, as certain dishonoured bills—the existence of which are possibly exaggerated likewise," he added, with a sneer, "can testify."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed I, "this is too much—you refuse to listen to my statements—but condemn me unheard: however, never shall my presence darken a threshhold where I am looked upon as an intruder; and, since you

have chosen to withdraw your friendship and affection from me, there is little need for my loitering here. Mary," I continued, addressing the weeping girl, "and do you join in condemning your cousin unheard? only say *you* believe them not, and I am contented." But, with a flood of tears, my cousin turned away, and slowly left the room.

"Then be it so," I uttered, nearly over-powered by my feelings, "uncle, farewell. Some day you will know with what injustice I have been treated; and then, perhaps, when too late, you may regret the irascibility of your present temper, which refuses to listen to reason—farewell :" and, without casting a look upon the Baron, I rushed from the house.

Immediately on reaching the small inn of the village, I called for pen, ink, and paper, and hurriedly penned the following note:—

" My Lord,

" Your uncalled for interference in, and perverted statement of, affairs wholly unconnected with yourself, have occasioned to me great, and, perhaps, irreparable, injury.

"It were needless to enter further into detail. Suffice it to say, if you have that regard for your name which would risk life to preserve its being coupled with every term of infamy, you will be at the shrubbery of the Druid Oak in two hours' time.

I have the honour to be

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

1 P.M.

Humble Servant,

Tuesday,

HARRY AUSTIN."

Lord Mantar,  
&c. &c. &c.

A messenger was soon found, and as quickly despatched with the letter, leaving me to the pleasant reflection of having irretrievably quarrelled with my uncle—forfeited the good opinion of my cousin Mary—made an enemy of Lord Mantar—and, with a good chance of being shot something within two hours; and in what originated this accession of annoyances? In what? Why, in the pale-faced gentleman's inordinate love of practical jokes.

## CHAPTER IX.

FAR different in appearance was the shrubbery of the Druid Oak to what it had been when last I visited the spot. It was then spring, and the joyous song of the birds, issuing from amid the many-coloured foliage of the various shrubs and flowers around, afforded a scene of beauty picturesque in the extreme; but now the cold mantle of winter was cast over all—the branches of the belt of high trees shot forth their frost-covered stems, unclothed by the loveliness of their variegated leaves—the once soft velvet turf now crisped sharply at the pressure of the foot—the whole face of nature had been changed—and nought, save the clear,

purling stream, held on its wonted course, quietly and unruffled as before.

The allotted interval had passed away, and the period for the meeting had arrived, still I was the only denizen of the spot—time flew, and yet Lord Mantar remained away. Was it possible he could shrink from the meeting? Or, by some unlucky chance, had my epistle never reached his hands? Very different were my feelings now to what I experienced when on my way to Chalk Farm. In the present instance I was goaded on by a strong and predominant desire for revenge. I felt that I had been grossly, and, in a false and unmanly manner, calumniated, for some sinister purpose of his Lordship's; and through his exertions was it that my formerly kind uncle turned his face away, and I felt my cousin Mary was lost to me for ever.

Still he came not; and the rapidity of the rate at which I walked up and down the small enclosure was a good criterion of the pace of my increasing impatience.

An hour had now elapsed beyond the time appointed, and I was communing with myself what course I had better pursue, when, startled by a slight sound, I turned suddenly round, and then beheld — not my opponent, but the mysterious, and once pre-eminently beautiful, Jane.

True it is that many a long day had glided by since our last meeting, yet there was little, in the length of the period, which might alone account for the too perceptible change in her appearance. On the pale cheek and marble brow sorrow had deeply impressed her seal ; the bright lustre of the once dazzling eye was for ever quenched ; the beautifully rounded shape had dwindled to a mere skeleton of the human figure, while her feeble steps seemed scarcely endowed with sufficient strength, to support her fragile frame. To me she appeared more like the disturbed tenant of the tomb than a dweller among men ; and when, at length, the hollow sounds of her voice struck on my ear, I could with difficulty divest myself of the

idea that I was holding converse with a being of another world.

"Why delay you here?" she at length commenced. "Know you not that those who possess power to work the ruin of your house want not the inclination? Has your absence been of such duration as to have alienated all the best affections from your heart? And do you thus idly squander away the time which might be employed in prolonging the existence of a parent?"

"My mother!" I exclaimed. "What of my mother? Why not divest your words and actions of the deep mystery in which you succeed in concealing every circumstance connected with yourself? If danger threaten, in Heaven's name, why not briefly say whence and in what shape it may be expected? That the dark hints which you have before now thrown out as a warning have their origin in well grounded apprehension I am convinced; but how is it possible for me to avert the threatened evil, if not placed fully in your confidence? Tell me,

I entreat you to tell me, who are you that pretend to so much knowledge concerning myself and family? And of what nature, and whence, may your anticipation of evil emanate?"

"Listen," slowly replied the emaciated, though still lovely, girl: "listen, and probably for the last time, to the words of one who, standing on the verge of the grave, dare not, even though interest and inclination might prompt her, to utter a falsehood. But what is interest to me now? What worldly advantage, what earthly rank, splendour, or pomp, can bring back to my seared and lacerated bosom the comfort of God's greatest blessing—a guiltless conscience? What gift exists, within the power of mortal to bestow, sufficient to heal those deadly wounds which, for ever, torture and agonize my brain? Would to Heaven I were mad, aye, mad," she vociferated, her voice increasing in energy as she continued, "mad, dead, any thing,—so that the cursed recollection of my monstrous guilt might be blotted out from my memory for ever—prayers

and penance have I tried in vain. In this frail, weak, attenuated frame, behold the evidence of never-dying remorse ; but I am fast hurrying to that bourne where my sins and my repentance will alike lie dormant from the eyes of the world. But will the heinousness of my offence, or the sincerity of my contrition, be remembered in the next ? I dare not ask. For to one steeped in crime, as I am, there cannot come even a glimpse of hope ; yet," added the trembling girl, folding her arms meekly across her bosom, and slowly bending her head, " God's will be done."

For a few moments, this poor creature appeared wrapt in prayer, but, on raising her eyes from the ground, she continued—" But what has this to do with you ? Listen to what concerns you more. I have already explained the purposes for which I was placed near Lady Distowe's person ; but my desire of shielding her from harm, and my evident unwillingness to lend my aid in the oft-practised frauds and deceipts hourly put in motion, created, in the

first instance, suspicion of my fidelity towards my employer, and finally occasioned my removal. You may perhaps ask why I submitted, without opposition, or, at least, without denouncing the authors of such evils ? My reply is that, though I loathed, detested, and momentarily execrated the very power which bound me to their will, yet, so strongly were the links of the accursed chain rivetted that they can never cease to gall me but with life."

"But what is the danger which you now anticipate?" I anxiously asked.

"Great, and perhaps momentarily at hand," was her answer. "Remember that, for months, you have been mourned, as for the dead. Why your relatives were, during so long a period, deceived, may probably be known to yourself; but such is the fact. You cannot have forgotten that, in the event of your decease, the uncontrolled disposal of your property would revert to your mother; and, so welcome was this addition of wealth to the shattered finances of your step-father that he immediately caused

the usual forms to be rapidly observed; and Selby, together with every thing pertaining to you, passed into his charge. Now, mark the result: from some most strange and supernatural instinct, Lady Distowe pertinaciously refused to give credence to the well-authenticated and widely-circulated report of your demise; and, firmly convinced that, at some future period, you might return, she consistently persevered in refusing to make over the property to her ruined husband. The annual income was, of course, at his disposal; but neither threats, promises, nor entreaties, could obtain the least portion of the principal.

“Thus was the baronet placed in nearly the same position as before, and as his difficulties multiplied, and so greatly augmented as to threaten his destruction, so were all his most influential energies directed in the endeavour to alter his wife’s determination, but without effect.

“Enraged at what he termed Lady Distowe’s unfeeling obstinacy, he commenced a series of

annoyances and ill usage which speedily would have brought his victim to the grave, when, as a propitiation, and in the hope of stifling his animosity, she was advised to make a will, whereby everything in her possession is bequeathed to Sir Frederick, in the event of his surviving her. Would to God such an instrument had never been framed, for, ignorant of your existence, he imagines nothing to remain capable of delaying his possession, beyond the fast expiring flame of your mother's life."

Here my informant paused, when, looking me steadfastly in the face, she added, "see you no cause to fear?"

"Fear what?" I replied, more alarmed by her manner than by her words, "why surely you cannot, dare not, mean to insinuate that—" and here I paused, as the dark, damning suspicion of murder shot through my brain.

"I insinuate nothing," rejoined my companion; "but, if you knew that with which I am but too terribly acquainted, you would be convinced that the reckless daring of desperate

men is not to be checked by moral opposition—weigh well my words—farewell."

Long before I recovered from the shock which this horrible surmise had inflicted, the once beautiful Jane had departed; and, as the hour had long since passed when my adversary might have been expected, I left the scene of my mysterious meeting, and again hurried towards the inn.

My first impulse was naturally to order horses, and proceed towards Selby; not that I gave full credit to the probability of the girl's harrowing suspicions coming to pass, but, since the idea of the possibility of such iniquity being perpetrated had been hinted at, however obscurely, I resolved that not an instant's delay should occur. The carriage was soon announced as being at the door, and my landlord, placing a letter in my hand which he stated to have just arrived, the horses took the way to Selby, with what speed they could.

On opening the packet I was as much astonished as delighted at recognising the hand-

writing of my cousin, and with great eagerness I perused the contents, which ran thus:—

“At the risk of descending from the strict propriety of my sex, I venture to address these lines to the companion of my childhood and the friend of my early days; since, notwithstanding the palpable shape which appearances have assumed against him, I cannot bring myself to suppose it possible for the whole nature of human being suddenly to have undergone so thorough a change as that laid to his charge.

“What the alleged misconduct was he, at our last painful meeting, declared himself to be unacquainted with; whether such ignorance be real or feigned, I cannot consider the circumstance otherwise than that he is fully entitled to be put in possession of all that has been advanced to his prejudice; since, if, in point of fact, he is ignorant of the accusation, it is but an act of common justice to afford him an opportunity of refuting what I trust, and something more than hope, will prove to be gross calumnies—if, on the contrary, his assertion had not its foundation in truth, it is imperatively necessary that his plea of ignorance should no longer be permitted to exist.

"This person, who was once my friend, is said to have circulated a report of his decease, when at Vittoria, the better to insure a prolonged and voluntary absence from his regiment, which was then in the field, in order to mature his plans, having for their object the escape of a nun from her convent. This deed is stated to have been accomplished ; and, soon after the occurrence, the deluded creature was cast from his protection without support, character, or friends. Furthermore, this individual is supposed to have obtained money in drawing bills in England, which eventually—as he well knew *would* be the case—were dishonoured.

"Avoiding his regiment, the person of whom I write returned to England, never having answered even one of the numerous letters addressed to him by his relations ; and, on arriving in London, instead of instantly hurrying to his friends, anxious to relieve the misery which he might have naturally supposed they were then suffering on his account, he is said to have remained for a long period in town, occupying his time with trifling amusements ; and at length he was discovered engaged in so base and unmanly an action as instantly to call down the wrath of the injured husband on his head—a duel was the result, but the particulars are to me unknown.

"So regardless of all feeling has he become, and so totally callous to the opinion of his family, as actually to have sold for a trifle an antique gold locket which formerly contained a portrait of his mother—the ancient frame of which is at this moment in my possession.

"Should it be possible to explain away these heavy charges, none will be happier than myself.

"As I detest all mystery, it is but right to add that the circumstance of this person's being still alive was only made known to my father and myself this morning. The communication, together with the foregoing details, were brought by Lord Mantar.

"I return a note addressed in a well-known hand to that nobleman, as his lordship left this prior to its arrival.

M. A."

"This then is the reason for his not attending to my challenge," thought I, as, leaning back in the carriage, I rapidly rolled over the ground; and here, too, is confirmation of the effects of his distorted gossipping—picking up small particles of a story here and there, and

then joining the pieces with cement of his own manufacture. True, the catalogue of crime, arrayed against me was sufficiently heavy to have authorized the old General's anger; but to suppose me capable of perpetrating such villanies was galling indeed. I was well aware that the story of the Señorita Agnes' escape had been circulated at home, for the pallid gentleman disclosed his marriage to his friends; but that the tale should be bruited abroad in so monstrous and garbled a form had never entered within my calculation. The circumstances connected with the bills my readers are fully apprized of, and the unfortunate affair with Mrs. Gregory has likewise been explained. The only packet of letters I received was the one which I thrust into my bosom on the morning of the 21st of June, and which I never saw nor heard of afterwards. Whatever epistles might subsequently have sought me were of course directed to the regiment, and, consequently, never came to my hands; and, as I was wholly unconscious of having been reported dead, I

naturally considered the unkindness and neglect evinced by the long silence of my friends, while I remained at Vittoria, little deserving of any advance on my part; so that, partly through mistake, and partly owing to my own false and highly culpable pride, both parties had fallen into error.

As regarded the latter part of my cousin's epistle, touching the miniature, I was wholly at a loss to account; for how a thing of so trifling a value, as the ancient setting to the picture, which I had lost, together with the letters, could have found its way back to my family, was inexplicable indeed: but that it was so, the statement of Mary Austin plainly asserted, and was consequently unquestionably correct.

My first impulse prompted me instantly to reply to the letter, and, by explaining each circumstance, as therein detailed to my disadvantage, fully—as far as my word went—to exonerate myself from a wilful participation in all or any of the charges thus adduced; but, on consideration, the idea arose that in all

probability, when my personal offer of elucidation had been rejected, little chance remained of credence being placed in my written vindication, the more so as, unfortunately, I had not a single evidence to adduce in corroboration of my veracity.

Stung to the quick with this reflection, and deeply agitated by the information which I had gathered during my late interview, I determined never again to seek that society which my own heart told me I had been most unjustly expelled from. For, taking into consideration the claims which I fancied I had a right to demand at the hands of my uncle, his persevering obstinacy in refusing to listen to my statement appeared in no milder light than a desire of seizing on the first opportunity that presented for estranging me from Mary.

Goaded on by such unsatisfactory and erroneous conclusions, I tore the letter which in the kindness of her heart my beautiful cousin had penned, into a thousand pieces, and casting them to the winds, determined that, without

advances on their part, no earthly consideration should ever induce me again to degrade myself by attempting a refutation of what I conceived unjustifiable in the old General for an instant to have harboured against me.

With such disagreeable reflections for my companions, I was hurried along the road, and at noon of the following day I arrived at Bath.

No sooner had I alighted from the carriage, than I hastened to call on my old and tried friend, Mr. Jephson, but unfortunately he was from home, thus depriving me of that counsel and information which I was at a loss to seek for from other quarters; so, leaving my portmanteau at the hotel where I had alighted, I preferred walking onwards towards Selby by myself, without being incumbered by the annoyance of any one capable or likely to interrupt my then state of feeling; for never did I feel myself less inclined for companionship, and the very circumstance of carrying with me a servant or driver, to herald my approach to the once happy mansion of my father, seemed, to

my disordered and agitated frame of mind, little short of voluntary persecution.

My directions were speedily given, and alone I pursued my path.

## CHAPTER X.

THE wintry blast howled dismally along the extensive Downs, and the icy chill of the piercing east wind struck sharply against my face, as I combated the fury of the sleet and snow which was fast drifting around me, and urged on my steps towards Selby. It was a dismal and cheerless day ; not a wanderer could I discover on the broad expanse of the plain beyond ; it seemed as if all living creatures had instinctively sought some place of refuge where they might rest securely from the pitiless blast which, with such fury, swept across the earth.

It was a scene much in unison with my state

of mind at the time ; for the outward appearance of desolation and misery but too well accorded with the horrible forebodings which, in spite of my utmost endeavours to the contrary, momentarily gained strength, as the distance between me and my destination visibly diminished.

Pursuing the scarcely - to - be - distinguished track, the well-remembered trees encircling my once happy home at length rose to view ; and, in brief space, I stood full in sight of the old Hall.

Yet not a creature was visible ; most of the windows of the building were closed, though it was yet broad daylight. The approach to the house, and the garden immediately about it, bore testimony to the total absence of any care having been bestowed on their appearance ; and, as the wind sighed mournfully round the angles of the building, a depressing melancholy struck upon my heart, which no words can possibly express.

The shutters of two or three of the lower

rooms remained unclosed, thereby giving indication of the dwelling's being still inhabited ; and, on walking round the house, I found the hall door wide open, as was the usual custom in days long gone by—still not a human creature could I see—all wore an air of desolation and decay—the very steps, and the carved balustrade of the portico were fast crumbling away—and the diamond-shaped pavements of the hall were, in many places, broken and uneven from neglect. Welcomed only by the hollow moanings of the winter blast, I once more stood upon the threshold of my fathers.

Mechanically I moved onwards, and, unquestioned by a single domestic, slowly ascended the stair-case. The doors of the apartments above were all closed ; and not a sound disturbed the death-like silence which reigned throughout the building. The slight echo of my own footsteps grated harshly on my ear, and, for an instant, I arrested my progress.

At that moment I fancied a low moan, as if proceeding from some one in pain, was borne

along the blast ; but again all was still. Could it be fancy ? Or was it possible that the sound of human suffering had struck on my senses ? Once more the faint, hollow groan was repeated, and now, convinced that the sound arose not solely in my own imagination, I advanced in the direction whence it appeared to issue. Gliding noiselessly along the passage, I despaired the door of a chamber partly open, and quickly recognized the apartment as that of my dear mother, and which I had never entered since the sad morning of my departure for Eton, when she clasped her miniature round my neck. All the intervening years that had glided by since that hour appeared but as a grain of sand in time's glass. The events which had chequered my existence, the days of my boyhood, the occurrences of my youth, the agony and perils which I had suffered—all seemed condensed into one brief epoch, and, in imagination, I stood by the side of my beloved parent, the same as when, imprinting her last affectionate kiss upon my forehead, she invoked Heaven's blessing

on her child, till I was forcibly carried from her weeping embrace;—again the sound was repeated, and silently I glided within the apartment.

It was a large room darkly wainscotted with polished oak, which from age had become nearly black—the mirrors placed against the walls were enclosed in heavy frames of the same material, and, reflecting back the sombre hue of the wood, added much to the dismal appearance of the place. Between the small inconveniently constructed windows, stood a cabinet of ancient workmanship, thickly inlaid with ivory, and which in all probability first saw the light at least two centuries back. The cumbrous drapery around the windows had been closed, save where a small space was retained sufficient to throw the necessary degree of light into the apartment, which, shooting across the room in one strong ray, fell direct upon the couch whereon reclined the wreck of all that remained of my mother.

In unison with the other furniture, was the funeral looking bed; the high feathers above

which, together with the once splendid, but now dark, hanging, curtains, gave it more the appearance of a bier for the dead than a temporary resting place for the living.

But how changed were the features of the gentle and patient being who reposed within the dismal panoply—her whole face was pale as the whitest marble—the eyes were but half closed—the mouth, the lips of which were wan and colourless, was motionless and still—not a muscle of that yet lovely countenance was disturbed ! All was now quiet—not a groan escaped the sufferer's bosom—all, all was hushed---pain and sorrow had overpowered the weak fabric, and she had sunk to rest. Could it be sleep ? Or was it—death ?

Fascinated to the spot, the power of motion was denied me. I stood gazing on the still form of my parent, as though rooted to the ground—I had no eyes, no senses, for any other object. On her face I had fixed my gaze, and I dared not move, nay hardly breathe, lest my dreadful anticipations should be realized, and

I should wake from my trance to a consciousness of my irreparable loss.

A dark shade, passing before the figure of my mother, for a moment obstructed the ray of light which poured from the window, and I found there was another being present, besides the dying and myself.

Oh, how the blood rushed back to my heart, and with what feelings of unconquerable aversion was I excited, when I discerned the features of my step-father! All my adoration for my mother, anguish for her sufferings, and bitter regret at my own procrastination, swelled into one current of fierce and deadly hatred against her destroyer.

Unrivalled by the deep cunning of an Indian savage, I secreted myself behind the many folds of drapery, which hung round the bed, and, finding an aperture through the curtain, which enabled me to command a view of his action, I resolved on closely observing his every movement, and inwardly swore that, should my suspicions prove correct, the blood of the mur-

derer should be offered up as a sacrifice to the innocent object of his crime.

He must have been in the room when I entered, although I saw him not. He was now standing by the bed-side, earnestly gazing on the countenance of Lady Distowe. His cheek was ashy pale, save when occasionally the blood would rush in unbidden force to his temples, and suffuse his whole face with an unnatural and unearthly colour. His mouth was half open, and his dark hair, deeply tinged with grey, lay lank and flat upon his damp and wrinkled forehead. Large drops of perspiration forced their way down the hollow cheek, and the entire countenance bespoke the concentration of every demoniacal passion, which the great master fiend could implant in the heart of the most favoured of his elect. Horror, all engrossing horror, had likewise added her influence to aid in the damning expression of his visage. His knees smote each other, and had it not been for the almost convulsive hold with which he clutched the curtains, this semblance of a man, though

possessed of the wickedness of a demon, must have fallen to the ground. All was quiet, save the beating of the wretch's heart, which sounded audibly, amid the silence of that awful chamber.

Stedfastly he gazed on the form beneath him; and his right hand still retained the cup from which he had apparently just administered some medicine to the sufferer. On a small dressing-table, close by the head of the bed, was placed the phial whence it had been poured, now perfectly empty—the very dregs having been drained from the bottom.

For full four or five minutes my step-father remained in this position, till at length the abstractedness of his gaze showed evident symptoms that his mind was wandering far from the scene before him. Eventually a sigh, or rather a groan, burst from his lips, and, starting as if from a trance, the consciousness of his position returned in dreadful reality.

Often had I been tempted to spring from my concealment, and rush upon the detested

object then standing within my grasp, but the impulse was violently repressed, when I recollected how unprepared I was to make any special accusation against him, and I therefore resolved to remain where I was, and watch his future proceedings.

Slowly and in deep silence he replaced the cup upon the table—again he looked upon the inanimate form of my mother, when, as if uncertain whether she slept the earthly sleep, or that which ‘knows no waking,’ he seized a small mirror, and, passing it backwards and forwards before her mouth, bore it to the light, and then anxiously examined the surface. A sardonic smile of satisfaction curled round his lips, as the most minute inspection failed in detecting the slightest sully on the glass—there it shone pure, as before—no breath of mortal dimmed its brightness.

Then it was that I first knew to a certainty that death had claimed its victim, and that my mother’s soul had winged its flight to a better and far happier region.

His next action was to remove a key from the marble slab on which, together with many others, it reposed ; and, with a stealthy pace, as though fearful of detection from the dead, he passed to the cabinet, and, having unlocked it, commenced a search for some object apparently of great moment. His labours terminated favourably, for, having drawn forth a packet, he thrust it into his bosom, and, hastily closing the lock, replaced the key where he had found it. He then seized the cup which had contained the medicine, and carefully washed out what remained of the contents, but, in his hurry and agitation, the phial in which the draught had originally been was for the time forgotten. His hand trembled so violently that he was scarcely capable of performing these several actions—and so unusually confused did he seem that I much doubted whether he was in entire possession of his faculties.

A slight noise was heard on the stairs—he seemed anxiously to listen—and with caution approached the side of the chamber opposite to

that by which I entered—again he paused, and, having half opened the door, advanced a few steps beyond the threshold. This was the period for action—and, darting from behind the curtain, I stretched out my arm over the lifeless body of my parent, and seized the phial in my grasp. There was a label attached to it, but as my eye was fixed on the door, which Sir Frederick still held in his hand, unread I was compelled to thrust it into my pocket, and instantly I resumed my hiding place.

There was one person in that house who was fully acquainted with the knowledge of my existence, though ignorant of my immediate neighbourhood, but which, for motives quickly to be made known, he had omitted to reveal—that man was my step-father's favoured friend and companion, my acquaintance at Hatchett's—my informant at the masquerade—the witness of my fatal duel with Humphreys—the smooth spoken Mr. Jackson.

While pursuing his avocations in London, he had by accident encountered me in the streets,

and, well knowing the value of his information, and how little it was shared by others deeply interested in the case, he hastened down to Selby, there to reap the gratification which he anticipated as the consequence of his discovery.

I was scarcely able to conceal myself as before, when Sir Frederick Distowe returned, closely followed by Jackson. The Baronet had in a slight measure mastered his feelings, but, whenever his eye wandered to that part of the room where the funereal looking bed was placed, I observed him quickly withdraw his gaze, while a thrill of horror appeared to chill his frame.

Nothing approaching to the least semblance of awe could be discovered on the countenance of his companion. The death of others, by whatever means, was to him a matter of unconcerned indifference. Yet was he not an uninterested performer in the scene, for the dark leer of malignant triumph which scowled from his eyes and hovered round the closely compressed lips showed the callous bosom of the wretch susceptible of harbouring feelings which to him tasted

of enjoyment—if such a word *can* describe the fiend-like exultation which at that moment his soul clutched and gloated on with a demoniac and savage rapture.

From time to time Sir Frederick drank from a large chrystral goblet placed upon the table; and, as he raised the inspiring beverage to his lips, the countenance of Jackson would rest upon his features with an indescribable expression of hatred and contempt.

“Your nerves appear to require stimulants,” sneeringly observed the latter, for the first time breaking the awful silence which, for so long and so oppressively, had reigned in the chamber, “I knew not that such quantities, and moreover such potent draughts, were necessary to inspire courage into so brave and honourable a bosom.”

“Cease your sneering and sarcastic tone,” replied the other, occupied during the time in searching for what I had no doubt was the phial, which he now missed, “this is no place to bandy useless words; but I have mislaid something which, for worlds, I would not lose—

surely I placed it on the table, but it is no longer here.” This was uttered slowly, and but just above his breath—the hoarse sepulchral tone in which he spoke rendering his words scarcely audible.

“Ah,” replied Jackson, never for an instant withdrawing his searching look from his agonized companion, “what signifies a small bottle, when you have so well provided yourself with a large one: ha! ha! ha! but perhaps,” he continued with a satanic expression of visage, “perhaps it might be inconvenient should it be found by others—eh, Sir Frederick—most high-minded and honourable Baronet—is such the case?”

“Suppress your ill-timed levity,” groaned out the other. “Is this a time for your accursed mockery? And *dare you* taunt me? What mean you by this insolence? Did you not plan this more than damnable deed, and have you ever ceased goading me on towards its completion, until at length the unholy work has been wrought? Demon! rather than man—answer.”

“The demon,” coolly replied Jackson, “is

obliged for the aptitude you evince in re-christening so unimportant a personage, but, until now, he knew not the honour he possessed in holding such power over the purposes and actions of so distinguished an individual as yourself—distinguished perhaps above his compeers. But to business—Is all over?"

"All," was the almost inaudible reply.

"And the will?" continued Jackson.

"Secure," added the Baronet, in the same stifled tone.

"Then the property is yours at last," coolly remarked the other; to which the Baronet nodded assent.

"In that case," resumed Jackson, "you will doubtless feel no objection instantly to sign this document, which I have had prepared with some pains—it merely assigns over to me all and every moveable article possessed by Lady Distowe, your *late* wife, whose premature, I should rather say lamented, decease, we are now met to condole on." And the grin of satisfied malice which glowed on his features

might have passed unrivalled by the author of all evil himself, “as you will, of course, inherit the property, such a trifling participation in your good fortune cannot be grudged by so generous a friend as you are;—and, as you were just pleased to express your entire satisfaction at the method adopted for bringing about this accession of wealth in your favour—of course, I have no impediment to anticipate. In short, I want money instantly, and persons and means are provided for conveying away every moveable article that can be laid hold of—therefore, sign.” And he laid a paper on the table, where writing materials stood ready at hand.

“ Of that,” replied the Baronet, with more coolness than he had hitherto shown, “you will, perhaps, allow me to be the best judge; and, as my want of money may equal, or probably, surpass yours, what if I should decline acceding to your very moderate request?”

“ Villain !” vociferated Jackson, “ you dare not, you shall not, refuse my demand. Have you not sworn to divide the spoil with me? and

would you endeavour to defraud me even of a fourth?"

"Suppose I were," interrogated the other, "what then?"

"What then?" echoed his brother in crime, "do you demand, of me, what then?" and he chuckled with ill-disguised and savage delight. "Fool," he continued, "think you that I am in *your* power? Has the besotted darkness of your brain taught you to hold me as *your* tool? No! While I have sought, by every means within my reach, to pander to your will; and while, in the presence of those around, I have cringed to the dust, and meanly played the contemptible sycophant at your beck—did your base nature deem such servile humiliation the result of my consciousness of the fact that superabundant honour was due to such exalted wickedness as yours? Far from it. Your unparalleled ingratitude and grasping avarice have now sealed your doom. The moment has arrived when you shall know me, as I am, not as I have seemed to be:—ask your own soul,

while yet on this side of eternal torment, what evil passion should most predominate in this breast against you—dive down into the innermost recesses of your thoughts, and ask why I should have staked my immortal welfare to peril your happiness for ever? Think you I would have stooped to herd with the lowest and most abject of the universe—to commit crime upon crime, in order to support an existence long since abhorred—to mingle in your disgusting orgies—to whisper poison in your ear, banishing each evanescent shadow of remorse, to plant thoughts of crime and wickedness in their stead? Think you I had no motive for these actions? That such enormities as mine, only to be surpassed by yours, were calmly planned, and deliberately acted on, for nothing beyond the temporary gratifications to be ensured by success? No — one passion — one powerful, all absorbing passion, has for years burnt with an unquenchable flame within my heart—racked my brain nearly to madness, and yet, I have assumed a quiet, calm demeanour,

while these blasting agonies raged within my bosom. My words, thoughts, actions, have all—all tended to one goal—the accomplishment of the sole object of my miserable life—dearer to me than all the world, and all beyond the world can promise—and now about to be accomplished. Ask for my motives? Speak;” and, grasping his companion by the throat, who struggled violently, he forcibly drew him towards him.

“Ask for my motive, villain?” he again enquired, in accents and with gestures more than horrible—“speak—No! has fear so quelled your daring valour that you cannot ask one poor word at the hands of your devoted slave—eh? Then hear me, wretch, while yet your palsied mind retains the power;” and, dragging his victim towards himself, he shouted in the miserable man’s face—“Revenge! !”—when, casting Sir Frederick from him with immense violence, he continued, “need you enquire why I seek revenge? Is it difficult, think you, to drag my reasons forth? No! no! no! To

others, my present assertions may appear incompatible with my actions for years past; but, in *your* breast, they must readily, and with ease, be accounted for. But, for our mutual gratification, and, if need be, to refresh your somewhat treacherous memory, I will repeat the tale. "Oh, God," cried the wretched man, again bursting forth into a paroxysm of acute agony, "if there be a penalty for a crime more deep, more damning, than another, surely this accursed sinner will receive the reward of his acts! Wretch!" he continued, again approaching his companion, who appeared powerless and speechless beside him, "listen to the dark catalogue of your enormities; and what spot so fitting to recount them as the scene of your last exploit—the bier of the murdered? Is it possible that the foul and bloated impurities of your mind can, at will, be cast aside, and the days of long past happiness be redeemed from obscurity? If such *be* within your power, remember the period when first we met—how did you find me? Happy, in affluence, content,

and prosperity—blessed with an angel, in woman's form, and wanting nothing to complete our felicity;—openly, and without suspicion, you were readily received into our society and confidence---and what was the result?---Play, accursed play, by little and little---at first assuming the appearance of an innocent pastime until, by your machinations, transformed into a confirmed vice---soon brought us to the verge of ruin---that passed---the result is easily arrived at---cast into prison---our house and property taken from us for ever---abandoned by our friends---spurned by our acquaintances---and passed by unheeded by others; is it strange that woman, all confiding woman, should have listened to your fervent protestations, and oft repeated promises of aid:---debarred by the walls of my dungeon from giving advice, and, consequently, incapable of protecting her who was dearer to me than life, she listened to the voice of the pitiful wretch before me---and, debarred from all aid, and all human compassion, fell, through the brute force of a monster---a mon-

ster, than whom none greater ever breathed. To attempt depicting what *I* felt, when the truth first burst upon me, would be lost upon a stranger to every human passion, save self-interest and gross sensual enjoyment. But," continued Jackson, scrutinizing the agonized features of Sir Frederick, "I must hasten on, ere you become incapable of appreciating the recapitulation of half the injury you have inflicted. Listen—not to repent; for, did I conceive that possible, my revenge, my deep-seated hatred and detestation would be but half appeased. Can you obliterate from your mind the remembrance of that fair, lovely being whom, up to this very moment, I have made an instrument whereby to work your eternal perdition? But, among my manifold crimes, thank God, I did not knowingly sacrifice that only hope---that sole blessing left me---even in so just a cause.

" You best know how that other sin was added to your black catalogue, and *that* sacrifice my child. Now mark well the sequel:—from that moment, mad with the accumulated misery

and disgrace which you had heaped upon me, I swore a dread and solemn oath, that no obstacle should deter me—no opposition avert the downfall of your character here, and the certainty of your everlasting perdition elsewhere.

“For this purpose, and to gain means of prosecuting my plan of vengeance, I leagued with the lowest ruffians in existence—I sought your society—I cringed at your feet—I openly treated my ruin and the dishonour of those dearest to me as a theme for praise in commendation of the destroyer—I worked myself into your entire confidence—I urged you on from crime to crime until you arrived at the climax of iniquity. To secure to yourself wealth, to which you had not the remotest claim, you hesitated not to stop at murder—and gladly and to my uttermost did I aid you—and willingly would I have accomplished the destruction of the boy you detested, had it only been to heap more guilt upon your head—for that object I decoyed him when first he appeared in London; and had he not by some chance escaped the fate you intended him,

some smaller share of guilt would have been added to the monstrous mass which now weighs you to the dust.

“To attain my aim, I again joined in the hellish plot concocted beneath this roof, but again Providence befriended the innocent, and another of your tools fell a sacrifice. At length your step-son was reported dead—it was believed, and apparently well authenticated—what then remained between your possessing the property and your present penury? What! ah, what, but the fast waning flame of life, which your brutality and gross usage had nearly crushed and extinguished in the mortal career of *your* wife—of *his* mother? Again I flew to your side, and, again whispering the fiendish temptation in your ear, too readily you acted—Now cast back a retrospective view of your life, and say where can you quote one passage even to soothe the short path to the grave?”

“Enough, enough!” exclaimed the other, burying his face in his hands—“spare me! for heaven’s sake, spare me.”

“Dare you invoke the name of heaven?” cried his tormentor, “and why should I spare you? Did you spare my wretched wife when writhing at your feet? Did you spare my once pure and beautiful daughter, when clasping your knees in the agony of supplication? Spare you! as God will surely punish me, so will I never cease persecuting you, until the earth closes over our mortal frames for ever. But yet a little while, and I will end my sad catalogue of crimes;—your imagination now revels in all the supposed luxury which your ill-gotten wealth can command; but know that, in spite of all your sins—of all the sacrifices you have made—in spite of having imbued your hands in murder, and for ever and ever forfeited redemption—in spite of all this I say—you have succeeded *not*—for Harry Austin yet lives.”

“Yes,” I exclaimed, dashing aside the sombre hangings that shrouded me—“lives—and lives for deep and terrible revenge.”

A shriek most piercing and, coming from a man, consequently the more unnatural, rung through the chamber, as my pale and emaciated

figure, suddenly rising by my mother's corpse, might well have been construed into a vision from the dead. With a convulsive start, his blood-shot eyes, nearly protruding from their sockets, Jackson sprung as if for shelter to his vile companion, who, overpowered by the shock, and overcome with fear, fell with an almost incredible force against the sharp end of the oaken cabinet—the blood gushed instantly from his mouth and ears—the next moment I planted my foot upon his prostrate body—it writhed beneath the pressure—a short gurgling sound rattled in his throat, and all was still. He had broken a blood-vessel in his fall, and the lump of clay on which I looked down had *once* been the gay, happy, and accomplished Sir Frederick Distowe!

Where was Jackson? Gone—he had for the time escaped, but, quickly turning round in search of him, something struck my side—it was the phial I had taken from the table—and, snatching it from my pocket, I rushed to the window, and by the then fast declining twilight read the legible word—“poison.”

## CHAPTER XI.

EVERY exertion, which human experience could suggest, was put in practice for the apprehension of Jackson, but in vain. His ingenuity baffled his pursuers—his haunts remained undiscovered—and in a few months it was believed that he could only have evaded justice, for so long a period, by succeeding in his escape from the country.

The never-ending journey of time flew rapidly along, and so rooted a dislike did I conceive for Selby that I requested my old friend, Jephson, to take the necessary steps for its disposal. Every recollection of the place, subsequent to my father's death, was fraught with misery and

horror. Not one hour of unalloyed happiness had I experienced ; but, on the contrary, the once peaceful abode of my parents had been converted into a scene of fraud, bloodshed, and murder.

In that room, where I had first beheld the dark insignia of death, surrounding the remains of my father, a fellow creature had been sent to his long and last account, without time for penitence or prayer—and by my hand.

Again was I compelled to witness the ravages inflicted by the unsparing hand of death. Within those walls, where the happiest hours of her existence had been passed, was the soul of my remaining parent destined for another world by the ruthless machinations of a man who, enveloped in the all-engrossing pursuit of administering to his worst passions, blotted out from his remembrance God's peremptory command, "Thou shalt not kill."

I had there seen the murderer weltering in his gore, struck by the unerring and inscrutable decree of Providence at that instant when,

stretching forth his hand, the prize for which he bartered his soul was, as it were, within his grasp. Within the brief space of an hour the murderer and his victim were laid alike unconscious, in the same chamber.

Not for the treasures of the universe would I again have inhabited that now detested mansion. Nothing could induce me even once more to plant my foot within its blood-stained precincts. Every thing around it partook of contamination ; and the very wind which flitted by the building appeared, to my jaundiced and diseased imagination, as bearing on its wings the foul atmosphere of pestilence and death.

Gladly did I receive information of Jephson's having met with a purchaser, and with eagerness did I sign the deed which conveyed the obnoxious property from my hands.

When sufficiently recovered from the horror and distress naturally attendant on the dreadful scenes I had so lately witnessed, I was compelled by the urgency of business to apply my best energies to the transitory affairs of this life ;

and, had I not been ably seconded by Jephson's legal knowledge and assistance, I should probably have never succeeded in convincing the lawyers of my existence. That object being at last effected, I gave instant directions for liquidating my debt due to the worthy Crosstock, who, up to this day, continues in his lucrative calling; but without the aid of his co-adjutor Brownley—for he, poor man, having amassed wealth sufficient to ensure all the luxuries of life, suddenly discovered that the mode in which he had passed the greater part of his existence was far from being irreprehensible; in accordance with which conclusion, Jonathan, like most enormous sinners, informed his friends—that is, those who owed him money—that, during the preceding night he had a call, which call he was resolved, like a good and pious mortal, to obey; and, having determined to give up business, he desired that each and every one of his debtors should immediately liquidate their accounts to the very uttermost farthing — or else he'd know the reason why.

Jonathan was a man not to be trifled with. The money was paid, though at the expense of ruin to many. A chapel was bought, at one-third of its value, from a bankrupt methodist, and, three times a week, within no great distance from what was once the cavalry riding-school at Saint John's Wood, the exemplary Jonathan may be heard praying at the highest pitch of his lungs, dealing out wholesale damnation to his flock, among whom, usurers and extortioners have no possible chance of being exempted—there being a special clause in each of his declamations for the purpose of consigning them to everlasting perdition. And who can say that Jonathan was wrong? Not those who borrow, surely.

The specimen by which I have attempted to exemplify the profession—for that is the cant term in the present day for every occupation, good or bad—is far from overcharged. On the contrary, there are few instances of the genus in whose favour so many redeeming qualities appear as in Brownley's. Yet, though not by

many degrees equal in deliberate villainy to his fellows ; nevertheless, the very trade by which he lived could not fail in rendering him hard-hearted and callous to the manifold instances of wretchedness and despair which were hourly presented to his view. How could it be otherwise ? Had he allowed his better feelings to predominate—for all men *have* compunctions of conscience, at some period of their career—he would have proved unfit for the line of life which he had chosen, and Jonathan might have dragged out an existence in penury, and died in want ; for, having voluntarily and openly embraced the unhallowed occupation, all other channels of advancement were closed upon him.

Having once before expressed my intention of consigning this subject to oblivion, I would not again have taxed the patience of my readers were it not in the hope that, should any of my brother-soldiers scan these pages, they may bear in mind, that, next to play, his Satanic Majesty never hit upon a better method for their de-

struction, than luring them within the power of professed money-lenders.

My leave was fast expiring, and though manifold, and some of them truly distressing, occurrences had imperatively taken up my time, I had not forgotten the heavy debt due to Lord Mantar, for his uncalled for officiousness: but again was I destined to be thwarted—for, on the very day when I left my uncle's, my calumniator was overturned in his carriage on his way to town, and so seriously injured that all thought of satisfaction—at least that satisfaction which society imperiously demands—was unattainable. The only resource left was to wait patiently for his recovery, so that he might be enabled to stand a second chance of annihilation through my agency.

That chance, however, never offered; for no sooner was the noble baron sufficiently reinstated in health, to undergo the fatigue of a journey, than he suddenly started off for the Continent, carrying with him the handsome Celestine Gregory as a companion.

Contrary to the expectations of his acquaintances, the jealous husband bore the shock with much more equanimity than had been anticipated; and, instead of pursuing the guilty pair, with fire and sword, to the very confines of the earth, Mr. Gregory, in the most urbane tone of voice, sent for his lawyer, and that person, without delay, put in train what the Morning Post designates as “occupation for the gentlemen of the long robe.”

The fact was that, immediately after our intended duel had been frustrated, Mr. Gregory, convinced that neither Daillie nor myself could have laid the information, was much puzzled to account for so strange a circumstance, and at last, after innumerable cross questions and examinations, during the progress of which the lady was occasionally detected in contradictions, he elicited a confession from his wife, to the effect that, being haunted with the dread of a meeting taking place, and actuated by her fears and paramount anxiety for his safety, she had written, in the agitation of the moment, to Lord

Mantar, as to the person she was best acquainted with in town, imploring him to find some means of frustrating the intentions of the belligerents.

Pressed by such urgent entreaties, the Baron lost no time in laying his information; and thus was our conflict put a stop to.

From that moment Mr. Gregory regarded his wife with suspicion ; and, having always evinced a rather prominent disposition to jealousy, this additional feeling added little to the pleasures of their domestic dialogues. Distant allusions and covert inuendoes were soon succeeded by biting sarcasm and personal invective, until unequivocal accusation for ever destroyed even the semblance of conjugal happiness.

Suspected by her husband, and well knowing the justness of his surmises, every moment of her life was blighted by the never-dying fear of discovery. Such a state of things could not long exist. To remain in her present position was impossible: yet to whom could she look for help? Had she been innocent, the consci-

ousness of her own purity would have sustained her, at this trying moment. And, though she might have drooped under the humiliation of unjust suspicion, pride and a sense of what was due to herself would have guarded her from error. But far different was the case. Concealment of her crime was the sole and primary object of her being; and, at length, after an exchange of a few sentences with her husband—the words and tone of which were delivered with more asperity than usual—in a fit of rage, hatre'd and shame, she drove to the house of her seducer, and cast herself in his arms.

So thoroughly selfish and sensual was her admirer that nothing could possibly have been further from his wish than to have appeared as the hero in such a piece of impassioned acting: and, though his Lordship was by no means averse to the amusement which his liaison afforded himself, and the gratification which its publicity administered to his vanity—he never for a moment contemplated being hampered with another man's wife—and that other

man, moreover, such a one as Mr. Gregory. But what was to be done? There stood Lord Mantar in a state as nearly bordering on distraction as his guest, but from very opposite motives—she pleading for an asylnm, with all the eloquence of despair—and he revolving in his mind how it would be possible to get rid of her. The carriage was still at the door—it was not yet too late to return—and, even had its waiting at his house been noticed, excuses might be framed, and a thousand tales invented to account for it; but the time was fast passing away. In vain he pointed out the certain misery which, by persisting in her resolution, could not fail in overtaking her—again and again he urged her to go home; but in that respect she was immoveable. No earthly consideration, she declared, should ever tempt her to take such a step—voluntarily she left her husband's house—and voluntarily she never would return.

“If,” exclaimed the wretched woman, starting to her feet from the humiliating posture in which she had supplicated for his protection,

“if you consider me as a burden, declare it at once---if, as a man, you fear to meet the remarks of the world, for the sake of her who has sacrificed every thing for you—her name—her honour—and her home—if you would now shake off as an incumbrance her whom you have torn from happiness, to plunge into misery—if the asylum I claim is to be denied, or only extended with reluctance, proclaim it now. And, though my own hand rid me of my hated existence, rather than again subject myself to such undeserved humiliation, I will never sue to human being more.”

There was an elevation in her tone, as, drawing her fine figure to its height, her beautiful eyes flashed with excitement, which spoke the woman possessed of the daring to conceive, and courage to carry her threat, without hesitation, into practice.

To such an impassioned appeal, what reply could he give? He was not *worse* than his fellow mortals, therefore, making the best of an unavoidable evil, he endeavoured to soothe her

anguish, and vowed by all the saints in Heaven never to forsake her.

Thus resolved, horses were put to his travelling carriage, and, long before Mr. Gregory discovered his loss, Lord Mantar and his companion were many miles beyond Canterbury, on their way to Dover.

The chances of future happiness, based on such a foundation, may easily be surmised—for where guilt is, no true pleasure can be found—and this was fully exemplified in the loves of John William Robert Dixlaw, Baron Mantar, of Mantar Castle, in the county of —, and the honourable Mr. Gregory, on whose peccadilloes the aforesaid gentleman of the long robe expected to raise up a very substantial sum of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Hitherto fortune, ‘that capricious jade,’ had not singled me out as a fit and proper object whereon to lavish all her choicest gifts; but now, as if wearied with persecuting further so unlucky a wretch, my circumstances assumed a brighter colour, and I began to look forward

to the future, with some slight glimmerings of hope.

As regarded money, I was in possession of a good income. My health was fully re-established—I expected speedy promotion in my profession—and all was sunshine, except where one small, heavy cloud obscured the beauty and perfection of the whole: and need I add that the continued coolness on the part of my uncle, and complete estrangement from my cousin, were the cause? Nevertheless, I felt certain that the period could not be far distant when the truth must be made manifest, and perhaps all might be well again. For I was convinced that, the moment the old General could be made sensible of his injustice, there was no one who would more deeply regret the line of conduct he had pursued than himself.

Peace had long since been proclaimed—the war was at an end---and Napoleon reposed at Elba. My old brigade had returned home, having marched through France, during the preceding summer. First impressions, it has

been said, are more lasting than those which may succeed them ; and although the regiment in which His Royal Highness had placed me was in every respect a most desireable one, yet I could not again behold the remains of the gallant Hussar brigade without experiencing a strong desire to rejoin them.

In those days of excitement, when a cold bivouac, without food, was more frequently met with than lighted saloons and sumptuous banquets, the aspirants to military fame were not by many degrees equal in number to the applicants of the present day, neither was promotion so difficult of attainment as it is now. In short, regiments into which, at this period, it is a matter of very considerable difficulty to enter, had no cause to complain of *want* of vacancies when in the field.

The regiment, in which I then was, occupied Brighton, but we were under orders for the vicinity of London, and expected to be relieved by a detachment of my old Peninsular friends. Each corps marched in two divisions ; and it fell to my lot to be attached to the second.

I was standing in the barrack-yard the day following the departure of the head-quarters, when I heard the trumpets at a distance heralding the approach of the Hussars; and, as they entered the gate, great was my delight at beholding the pale-faced gentleman riding at the head of his squadron, for promotion had, of course, fallen to his share, in common with others. I know not how it was, although the many miseries I had suffered might justly have been laid to his charge as their author, yet it was impossible to see my old companion again without bounding towards him, and uttering my congratulations on his return.

Cordially he grasped my proffered hand, and rapidly expressed his pleasure at the meeting. He was just as pale as ever, and in no instance had his appearance in the slightest degree changed from what it had been when first our acquaintance commenced. I was on the point of asking after the Señorita, or rather Doña Agnes, when I checked myself, thinking it most prudent to wait until he first commenced the

subject; for, not having heard of them since leaving Vittoria, it would be hard to say what the intervening time might have brought forth, but my companion soon relieved my anxiety.

"Austin," he said, having dismounted, and seating himself before a substantial breakfast, "I can't tell you how delighted I am at again seeing you—why, old fellow, 'tis an age since we met, aye, that it is—do you remember the night when we improved the old Don's fountain for him? Many a laugh have I had in my sleeve, when thinking of it. I should like to go back to Vittoria, if it were only to ascertain whether they've taken the ornamental top part down yet. But, I say, old fellow," he continued, "you have'nt asked after your friend the Señorita, the deuce is in it if you've forgotten her."

"Indeed I have not," was my reply; "and I sincerely hope she is in England, and well."

"Thank ye, old fellow, thank'e," he responded, "all right, right as the mail; many a time she asks after you, I can tell. She has made the

best wife ever man possessed, and I'm a devilish lucky fellow."

"But where is she?" I enquired.

"Down in Gloucestershire with my friends; I took her home; and, being compelled to march with my men, I thought it better to leave her there until I could get a house prepared for her reception—so there she is, the pet of my old mother and sisters; and they don't get on the worse together for not understanding one syllable that either party utters."

I could not avoid laughing at my companion's system of getting on well with people whom you are destined to pass much of your time with. But, as he appeared truly happy, and in as exuberant spirits as ever, I doubted not but he had made a fortunate hit, and found a spirit congenial to his own.

On throwing off his pelisse, I discovered the sleeve of my pale-faced friend's jacket had been ripped open at the seam, and fastened together at intervals by pieces of riband, thereby denoting that fracture or injury of some sort had been suffered by the limb.

"I did not know you had been hit!" I exclaimed, drawing his attention to his arm, "and it must have been an awfully severe crack, not to have healed by this time—but tell me where it happened."

"At that cursed South sea Common," answered the white Captain.

"South sea Common?" echoed I, "why, what on earth where you doing there?"

"What! didn't you hear of that business? oh, Lord! my dear fellow, you know nothing."

"The more reason then for your enlightening me," I replied; "so now for the tale."

"Oh," continued the other, "there's not much of a tale in the matter; but, if you've a mind to hear it, well and good. Another glass of that Curaçao, old fellow? fine thing of a morning—there—that will do—your health—and now for South sea."

"On reaching England," commenced the narrator, "it was my fate to be landed at Portsmouth, at which emporium of sobriety and virtue I was ordered to halt for a few days. Well,

one afternoon, for want of better employment, I mounted my horse, and rode out in the direction of the aforesaid common—a spot, you must know, much frequented by ladies, who have the misfortune of being indissolubly linked to gentlemen who, making the ocean their home, feel quite out of their element on returning from abroad—and where, in many instances, their re-appearance is less cared for than expected. When I reached this place of virtuous retreat, I found a body of marines going through as many and as complicated evolutions as there are links in a collar chain. At length the whole line advanced, covered by skirmishers, when, rushing from the left flank, zealously bent on performing this actively required movement, came—now, who do you think, Austin, eh?"

"How can I tell;—who was he?"

"Burslem;" shouted the pale man, making the room ring with his laughter,—"Theophilus Burslem, the jolly marine, who cut off with the hairy lady at Delmeshow Park. There he was waddling along like a nervous turtle with a cook

after him—he waved his sword—he hollowed—shouted—stopt—then tried to run again—and I verily believe he wound himself up to such a pitch of military enthusiasm as actually to fancy himself engaged. In due time, and by the most praiseworthy, though almost incredible, exertions, he reached the advanced line; but then began his misfortunes, for the bugle sounding the retreat, at the double, poor Burslem found himself alone. He had not improved in his paces one iota since you fired at him in old Morton's park: but what was to be done? The men had long since regained their original position in the line, but still the commander had above half his journey yet to accomplish: how you would have laughed, Austin, had you seen him. As for me, I sat on my horse, and actually roared: but when the firing commenced from right to left, his situation was truly pitiable. I suppose old Burslem had seen such a thing as a ramrod left in a musket by mistake; and how could he tell but that a similar blunder might occur on the present occasion? so, wisely

judging it foolish to risk danger where no honour was to be gained, our friend prostrated himself at full length on the ground, where he personated one of the dead, as the Irishman said---to the life.

“When the drill was over, I made up to my old acquaintance, but instead of greeting me in the warm manner which I had anticipated, he drew himself up as high as he could manage---said I had grossly insulted him when at Deal ---that he had in vain sought for me ever since ---swore that nothing but blood could wash out the stain---and finally declared I must fight him.

“Now, we all know that, with his numerous eccentricities and ridiculous appearance, old Burslem is any thing but deficient in courage ; and, since the publicity with which he attacked me precluded the possibility of an apology emanating from me, I was reluctantly compelled to meet him ; and here,” concluded my friend, slightly tapping the wounded limb, “and here you behold the result.”

"So you likewise have suffered from your practical jokes, my friend," I remarked, to my companion.

"Oh, that's nothing---I can't live without fun---and fun I must have—but let that pass. I was going to propose that, as many a day has gone by since last we met, and as you march to-morrow, we *must* dine together, for I have many things concerning which I am anxious to consult you. Then, old fellow, we shall have the evening to ourselves; and, if we can't find amusement, it must be somewhat strange."

"With the greatest pleasure," I replied; "remember we meet at seven."

"Agreed," rejoined the pallid gentleman; and we parted for the remainder of the morning.

## CHAPTER XII.

ON leaving my friend I mounted my horse, and rode towards the town, where unsettled bills and various small matters of business are sure to obtrude upon one's notice when about to quit a place where, for any length of time, we have sojourned; and Brighton is no exception to this general and commonly admitted rule.

I was coming out of a shop in North Street, when I observed a crowd of boys gathered round some persons, who, by their dress and the imperfect view I could obtain, appeared to be foreigners. To me it has ever been a source of great annoyance when abroad, to find myself an object of ill-bred curiosity to the canaille, who,

with a perseverance worthy of a far better cause, frequently follow the footsteps of a stranger from street to street, as if it was by his particular desire they so honoured him, until, when fairly run down, he is obliged to seek refuge in his hotel, within which narrow precinct he is, with reluctance, compelled to remain until the darkness of the evening precludes the possibility of his being recognized during his rambles; and at the same time hides from his view every object which he might have felt anxious to behold.

So it was with the unfortunates who were winding their progress down the street, escorted by a tribe of vagabond urchins, who seemed bent on seeing as much as could be stared at of the strange figures whom they surrounded.

As the group advanced, I discovered by the black lamb-skin caps and long close dresses, they were Persians; and, on scrutinizing their features, the person walking between the other two much resembled, in face, my old acquaintance Hedak Beg; but, I had long given him over as defunct, and little expected to behold

him promenading about the streets of Brighton. Yet it was he—joyously his laugh sounded as he conversed with his friends ; and it was very evident that no fear of the dagger or the bow-string now stood before his eyes. Very different was he from the trembling Hedak whom I had last seen at Wantage, at a time when death and disgrace seemed inevitable ; and when his depressed spirits and dejected air betrayed a mind ill at ease indeed.

So far from despondency still possessing any influence over him, his look was cheerful and happy—his step firm—his eye bright ; and, I remarked that, whenever he addressed his companions, they invariably replied with that deep and reverential respect which all humble dependents should never fail in evincing when listening to the prosy remark, or hundredth time told story dribbled out by some influential and flourishing patron.

“ Hedak Beg !” I involuntarily uttered, as the Persian and his retinue approached, who, on hearing his name pronounced, naturally turned towards the spot whence the sound proceeded.

"Mr. Austin!" replied the equally astonished diplomatist—and the embrace which my acquaintance was pleased to bestow upon me, according to the most approved Eastern fashion, added considerably to the amusement which the dirty little boys around had for some time enjoyed, by following the foreigners.

"May your shadow never be less," commenced the Persian, grinning from ear to ear, in imitation of what he had observed as the custom on greeting in England; "and may the flood of your prosperity sweep away the rocks of adversity."

"Thanks, Hedak," I replied, "many thanks for your kind wishes. But tell me your adventures. How did you escape the fangs of the Mirza? How avoid the dreadful calamity which you were obstinately bent on seeking, when we parted at Wantage? I assure you my wonder at seeing you again is only to be equalled by delight at finding you in safety—but, tell me, how did it happen?"

"Ah, ha!" he answered, "the Mirza—the

Mirza," and forthwith he spat on the ground, as if there was pollution in the mere circumstance of having allowed the name to pass his lips. "Ah ! ha ! may his father's sons sons eat dirt—may their livers be turned into water—and may their tombs be defiled."

Finding me fully prepared to coincide in so rational and Christian-like a desire, my informant appeared to derive therefrom much satisfaction ; but, as our short parley had already occasioned a very considerable increase of audience, I proposed adjourning to the Steyne hotel, to which my friend having acceded, his companions, after many salams and marvellous gestures, led the way.

Having been shown into a private room, I remembered the old gentleman's propensity ; and, judging from the superior facility with which the good vintage of mine host at Wantage opened the innermost recesses of his heart, I thought it would save much time, and beating about the bush, were I to order a similar collation, which, having made its appearance, was as quickly attacked.

As for his two companions, or attendants, or whatever they were, it was in vain trying to entice them from out of a corner of the room, wherein they had taken up their abode: there they persevered in remaining cross-legged, squatting upon their hams, and so extraordinary did their position appear in the eyes of the officiating waiter that, I verily believe, he thought they were hatching eggs for their master's consumption.

After due and sufficient attention had been lavished on the lunch, I again urged my companion to disclose the lucky chances by which he contrived to evade the fate which many months before he considered as inevitable.

"True, true," remarked Hedak, emptying at one draught an immense goblet which *had* been filled with Mahomet's most particularly-to-be-condemned beverage. "I remember our meeting well, and, doubtless, you must feel surprised at seeing me wandering about Brighton at a time when you considered it most probable I should find myself reposing some few feet under

ground in the vicinity of Ispahan ; but," he added, " thanks to Mahomet, that is *yet* to come ;" by which assertion he appeared greatly to rejoice that the fun was only postponed, not finally cancelled.

In the course of our conversation, I gathered the following particulars from him, the relation of which evidently afforded very considerable gratification to the narrator. But the story of his adventure was so intermixed with ejaculations in praise of the Prophet, together with oft-repeated invocations to the effect that dirt and abominations of all sorts might be heaped upon the Mirza's family, past, present, and to come—that were I to repeat his account verbatim it would hardly assume a legible shape, I will therefore take the liberty of divesting it of all its superfluous ornaments, and endeavour to give the substance, without the variations.

When I parted from the sorrowing oriental at Wantage, what between the dread of approaching death, and the certainty of fast-coming drunkenness, Hedak was in a truly

pitable state. It may be remembered that, on the occasion referred to, I exerted, to the uttermost, all the eloquence of which I was possessed, in the endeavour to dissuade him from rushing on destruction, for such he assured me would inevitably befall him the moment he set his foot in Persia. But all my arguments proved unavailing; go he would—let happen what might. And, assuredly, I never expected to behold him more.

Off started Hedak for Portsmouth, where he was to embark in the veseel destined, as he imagined, to bear him to his death. He there learnt that the ship in which the Mirza sailed had left that port full three weeks before; so that all hope of forestalling that worthy's information was at an end. Sadly and slowly the wretched Persian made preparations for his voyage---with an aching heart he bade a final adieu to the many pleasures in which he had so long revelled, and for ever and ever he consigned to the lowest pit of the infernal regions the souls of those officious gentlemen whose

uncalled for interference marred the little melodramatic spectacle which his three executioners had endeavoured, with the aid of the Mirza, to get up.

But all the repinings in the universe could not prevent the wind veering round to the proper quarter ; and, when such was ascertained to be the case, no argument of his could alter the determination of the Captain to set sail. It was a sorrowful day for the lachrymose foreigner when he stepped on board the vessel that was to carry him to destruction. Visions of long since digested dinners passed through his mind, the music of gone-by balls fell on his ear. In imagination he again rode the auto-da-fé doctor round the mess-room ; he thought of the many hours that had passed, and the very few that were to come. His mind rapidly reverted to the remembrance of the beauties of England, and as instantly started off to contemplate the ugliness of the Ispahan bow-string ; in short, Hedak was miserable, “his heart with grief was breaking.” So, bequeathing his top boots

and spurs to his successor, he was conveyed to the beach, powerless from grief and sherry, and in a second he was tossing on the bosom of the deep.

As a last chance of escape, the crafty Persian had well provided himself with presents, to lay at the feet of his sovereign, wisely imagining that, should the fancy of the king prefer them to those of which the Mirza was the bearer, possibly his life might be, for a time, at least, prolonged; not as a return for the wondrous things which he brought with him, but merely to enable him to get more, which end he shrewdly suspected would not the more readily be effected by putting him to death. But these were all airy speculations, on which he could not lean for help, with a certainty of support. It was possible that the great king, his master---brother of the moon---father of the sun---and, by his own account, nearly related to every planet in the heavens---might, in the superabundance of his mercy, postpone his execution until he had gathered together a large assort-

ment of curiosities, even as a thrifty housewife delays passing sentence of decapitation on a member of her poultry yard, until the doomed bird has attained a further addition to his weight; still this was only a possibility, and very far from probable. The king might take a fancy to his head, or his majesty might not; but Hedak too well knew the bent of the royal eccentricity to buoy himself up with too sanguine hopes of the future.

Numerous and valuable were the costly presents which this indefatigable servant was the bearer of to his royal master, but many of the articles which he carried with him were by the Persian destined to purposes of which the inventors never conceived the most distant idea.

For example. During his stay in London, when one day wandering down the Strand, he arrived at a warehouse filled with a quantity of articles, of the use and nature of which he was profoundly ignorant. It was a portable chair and bedstead manufactory; and, as in Persia they use neither the one nor the other, Hedak

was sadly puzzled. Blessed with a tolerable share of laudable curiosity, he entered the abode where these wondrous and distorted looking specimens were exposed for sale: much he marvelled, and greatly did he ponder on all he saw; but there was one article amid the many whereon his attention became rivetted—numerous were the screws and springs which ornamented the long back of this strange specimen of art. At pleasure you could increase or diminish its dimensions—the arms could be raised or lowered at will. By the pressure of a spring, the hinder support could be raised to a perpendicular, while, by touching a screw, the whole machinery dwindled to one third its size. In short, it was a tooth-drawer's chair.

Confident that such a rarity never, up to that hour, had found its way into Persia, and unable or unwilling to listen to an exposition of the purposes for which it was created, it occurred to the ever active mind of the diplomatist that, as a frame wherein to place state criminals for execution, it would prove a great acquisition to

the Court, since the culprits could be raised or lowered, elevated or depressed, either for the cimitar or bowstring, as it might best please his Majesty to direct ; and, being an entirely new instrument, could not fail in producing much pleasure and gratification among the distinguished circle who, Hedak had not the least doubt, would instantly put it in motion, were it only to see how it worked.

Such an opportunity was not to be lost ; the chair was immediately purchased, together with one of Pratt's patent iron bedsteads, which the Persian persisted in saying was meant as a sort of gridiron whereon to stretch malefactors, the intention of which was made manifest by its elevation from the ground, being just of sufficient height to enable a slow fire to be kindled beneath.

There were many other and equally common articles of furniture and comfort, which had been converted into uses, and destined to purposes, which no one but himself could have guessed. But there was one treasure he pos-

sessed, more valuable in his eyes than all the others put together, and that was an electrifying machine. Having seen a Galvanic battery charged at St. George's hospital, during an experimental lecture, he could not rest until he obtained something approaching to so miraculous a monster, and, as the coveted apparatus was too bulky for his purpose, he purchased an electrifying one of great power ; and, by the aid of one of the younger practitioners, he was in due time enabled to work it himself—a fact which all his attendants could easily vouch for, since not a day passed that some or all of them were not touched up with the fluid. There was one poor sinner in particular, his pipe-bearer, who, from being a great stout mortal had dwindled down to less than a scarecrow, through the oft inflicted shocks which the trembling wretch was compelled to undergo ; for so expert at last did his master become that he was enabled to charge the door-handles, and different articles which his people were compelled to come in contact with, until they looked upon the im-

plement of their torture as the foul fiend himself, and on their master as Satan's prime minister on earth.

In due course of time Hedak and his purchases arrived at their destination, and immense was his joy at hearing the unlooked for intelligence of the non-arrival of his enemy. The Mirza was still absent, and, as it afterwards appeared, owing to foul weather—which Hedak by his postponed departure avoided—had been compelled to put into port and to refit. Now then was his time—not an instant was to be lost, for his foe might at any moment arrive; and, as my sagacious friend well knew the advantage to be gained by the first statement of a case, off he started to the royal presence, where, craving an audience, he was presently admitted.

The reception with which his Majesty vouchsafed to honour his slave was condescending in the extreme; but Hedak easily accounted for the honour, by the simple circumstance of his not as yet having been put in possession of the presents of which his Majesty was aware his

minister was the bearer. Great was the curiosity of the Court on beholding the dentist's chair, and indefatigably they pulled first one spring, then another, raised and lowered the back, hauled it here, then pushed it there, so that they more resembled a set of drowning mariners working at the pumps for their lives than the ornaments of a Royal Court viewing a piece of furniture.

With the iron bedstead the king was highly delighted, and, as Hedak had predicted, a culprit was sent for, in order to afford the monarch an opportunity of demonstrating its efficacy by ocular proof.

During the inspection of these and various wonders which the wily old Persian laid at the feet of his sovereign, he failed not to pour into the prince's ear the most dreadful accusations against the Mirza---and when, delighted with the presents, the king heard from the lips of Hedak that a most splendid piece of mechanism was on the eve of being finished for his majesty, and which moreover it had been Hedak's inten-

tion to have brought, had not his enemy ordered him to return to Persia without delay, the grin of disappointment which the royal countenance exhibited boded no good to the absent minister. In short, Hedak made such excellent use of his time by the marvellous inventions and horrible accusations, which he laid at the door of his opponent, that all he wished for was the Mirza's presence, in order that he might witness his instant annihilation.

After trying many experiments with the chair and bedstead, much to the satisfaction of all, except the performers, the Court broke up; but not before Hedak had been re-instated into favour, and directed to attend the levee the following morning.

Notwithstanding all these flattering appearances of prosperity, the crafty diplomatist had served too long an apprenticeship at Court to be entrapped by such outward and visible signs of his monarch's approbation, and well he knew that, the moment his back was turned, there would arise many, who were both willing and capable

of speaking to his detraction and disadvantage---therefore, instead of heedlessly joining in the merriment his friends caused to be created in honour of his return, the gentleman retired into the innermost recesses of his mansion, there to ruminate on the past, and digest plans for the future.

His main hope, wherein alone, of all other things, he trusted, was the electrifying machine, which as yet he had kept hidden from the knowledge of his countrymen ; but which he confidently looked upon as capable of well befriending him in time of need—but the question was how best to employ it ? And it was not until within a short period of the next day's audience that he fully resolved on what course to follow.

It was easy enough for the minister to discover, from the aspect of the king's countenance, that his enemies had not been idle since the preceding levee ; and poor Hedak saw the immediate necessity of extra exertion on his part, otherwise the cloud which was fast gathering on the royal brow might burst and overwhelm him in its fury.

The first question put to him, after having performed the necessary salams and prostrations, was an enquiry as to whether he had brought any more presents, exclusive of those already offered? And, the answer having been given in a cheerful and ready affirmative, the black scowl on the princely visage assumed a less terrific aspect, but when Hedak declared it was a magical instrument, by which his majesty could always detect his friends from his foes, the royal delight was raised to such an uncontrollable height that he instantly ordered the fire under the bedstead to be kindled, and two culprits were made ready for roasting, to show the exuberance of his joy.

This miraculous instrument was by Hedak asserted to possess magical qualities which, however, could only be brought into play through his aid, since the secret was confided to him by a learned magician in London, whose wisdom the Persian stated as being of so extended a quality as far to outshine the accumulated knowledge of all past generations.

When the king heard how necessary the existence of his minister was, in order that the instrument should retain its virtues, he dismissed from his mind all idea of putting Hedak to death—at least until after his own curiosity had been fully satiated. He therefore commanded the present to be brought forward.

Prior to its exposure to the public gaze, the owner, fearful of its speedy annihilation through the curiosity of the Court, thought fit to explain that, should any one presume to touch any part of the machinery, without his permission having been previously granted, immediate and dreadful calamity would befall him and his forthwith. But, should his orders be obeyed, his majesty would find the machine of the greatest value to himself imaginable, since, by directing any person to touch a particular chain, it would be made manifest whether he was a good and faithful subject, or whether, in the blackness of his heart, he foully conspired against the happiness of his king. Those who were innocent might hold the chain unharmed—but those who were guilty

would feel an invisible sword plunged into their bodies, inflicting dreadful, but unseen, tortures.

So eager was the king to behold the efficacy of this acquisition to his cabinet that, in his anxiety to possess himself of it, he was the first to break through the order against attempting to touch the apparatus ; and had not Hedak, throwing himself between the Monarch and the machine, besought him not to draw down the vengeance of the spirit by neglecting his decrees, the brother of the moon would have received a shock which would have astonished even majesty itself. As it was, however, he was content to suppress his impatience for a time, and to rest satisfied by indulging his eye-sight.

Close to the king stood a tall, sallow-coloured, dark-eyed man, who, meanwhile viewed Hedak and his preparations with a mingled expression of hatred and contempt. This man was an officer high in favour at Court—a sworn friend of the Mirza's, and consequently Hedak's declared and bitter enemy.

The disagreeable expression of the gentle-

man's countenance was not lost upon the Persian, who, while charging the machine to the uttermost, secretly vowed to be revenged upon the wily courtier.

When the instrument was ready, nothing remained wanting beyond the commands of the sovereign regarding the selection of an individual on whom to practice the charm ; but the plans of my poor friend were nearly all cast to the ground, by his Majesty's declaring his intention of first trying the power of the magic on his own person—feeling, I imagine, pretty confident of not being detected in plotting against himself. What was to be done now ? If the king touched the chain, the shock must instantly take effect, and Hedak's death would of course follow as a natural consequence. Somehow or other the shock must be got rid of, or in a few seconds his head would part company from the rest of his body.

Notwithstanding the predicament in which he was placed, Hedak lost nothing of his accustomed coolness, but, assuring the king of the

absolute necessity for causing some less exalted personage to try the experiment, prior to risking his sacred person, he was with some little difficulty appeased, and, to Hedak's inexpressible delight, the courtier with the sallow countenance was commanded to approach.

Considerably less tainted with the superstitious follies in which so many of his countrymen placed implicit credence, than was generally the case with those around, he carelessly advanced to the spot where the supposed magical apparatus was placed, yet cautiously prepared against any sudden attack from mortal weapons, which he judged it far more necessary to guard against than spiritual ones.

But, in this instance, his superior knowledge availed him little ; for, confident in his own integrity, and unconscious of any desire or intention of acting in opposition to his sovereign's will, he boldly approached ; but, no sooner did he lay his hand upon the chain than the whole force of the electric fluid rushing through his frame nearly cast him to the earth ;

as it was, the yell he uttered was sufficiently piercing to have alarmed the whole city ; but the moment he was capable partly to collect his disordered faculties, the first object he beheld was the tooth-drawer's chair ; and, having a somewhat indistinct idea that, provided he remained in the presence, the next seat he occupied would, in all probability, be on the cushion thereof, he wisely judged it adviseable not to wait for any ceremonious leave-taking, so, quickly turning his back upon Majesty, without hesitation, parley, or excuse, fairly “girded up his loins, and fled.”

Numerous were the Allahs and Mashallas which sounded through the apartment, on the magical power of the instrument being thus made manifest ; and not a few of those who, before, had stood prominently forward, were now observed sneaking behind their companions, as if desirous to escape a summons to the trial.

Again the Monarch expressed his wish of ascertaining what were his own feelings in

regard to himself ; and having, as I conclude, some doubts as to their exact nature, he referred the decision to the apparatus which had just worked so great a miracle as to prove, beyond all doubt, that apparently the most faithful of his subjects was, in reality, his most inveterate foe.

Those who disliked Hedak, and who had all along fancied the whole affair to be neither more nor less than a juggle, though unable to fathom its source, felt secretly rejoiced when the prince's determination was made known ; since, in the event of the magical demon making some little mistake, it was more than probable that the head of the owner would pay the penalty. But Hedak was no such fool as these persons imagined — the shock had been expended, and he took care to leave the apparatus uncharged, until after the royal curiosity had been satisfied.

Great was the king's delight at finding so discreet a magical box—and very considerably rose the Prince of evil in the opinions of all

beholders. Hedak was now at the zenith of his popularity—the king was delighted beyond measure at possessing so valuable an addition to his treasury, and mentally he further postponed the death of a servant without whose aid, he was assured, the charm would lose its power. At this instant—this most critical moment—the guards fell back to make way for an individual approaching—and the Mirza cast himself at the feet of his sovereign.

Now was Hedak's time, and readily he seized it; for, before the Mirza had gained opportunity for utterance, his opponent's voice was heard in urgent supplication.

“Allah, illah, allah!” began Hedak, “most mighty, powerful, and all-omnipotent sovereign, may thy shadow never be less, and mayest thou live for ever! But oh, great king! whose dog am I, that I should eat such dirt? Lo, the Mirza comes with false accusations, hoping to turn my liver into water, and to defile my father's grave! God is great—the Mirza is the traitor, not I—there is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet! Put him to the test,

oh mighty monarch ! Let him touch the magic chain ; if he is guilty, well—if not, then let thy slave die. Thus, oh king, have I spoken—allah ! mashallah ! God is great !”

As nothing could have been more reasonable than such a request, his desire was universally approved of, and the Mirza was accordingly directed to stand the ordeal ; when, half dead with fright, and wholly unconscious of the nature of the instrument, he did as his predecessor had done before him, and touched the chain, when, springing some feet into the air, he fell, at full length, motionless upon the ground.

The sequel may easily be arrived at—Hedak lived—the Mirza died ; and, covered with a new coat of honour, in testimony of his sovereign’s approbation, the recalled minister was invested with fresh powers and instructions, and again despatched to England.

Such was Hedak’s account of his escape ; and truly delighted was I that he had not—as I supposed he would inevitably have done—perished.

I told him of the engagement existing between the pale gentleman and myself; and, with much pleasure heard the Persian accept my invitation to join us.

The last time but one on which I beheld Hedak Beg was about four o'clock the following morning. He was then prostrate on all fours, in the middle of the Steyne, praying most fervently, having mistaken the great lamp over the hall-door of the club-house for the rising sun, which, he solemnly averred, was getting hotter and hotter every second.

Compelled to march in the course of an hour, I was prevented enjoying the satisfaction of witnessing the conclusion of the farce. Not so the pallid officer — he remained at his post ; and such good care did he take of the Oriental that, when, at about five o'clock, I was slowly leaving the town, in rear of my squadron, I descried the woe-begone visage of the Persian grinning through the iron rails of the watch-house window.

How he got there, he and the white Captain alone can tell.

## CHAPTER XIII.

AT the time of our march towards London, the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba was the theme of every conversation. The fancied security of peace, which people of all classes had commenced to speculate upon enjoying, was brushed away in an instant, and again the clang of warlike preparations sounded from one end of the kingdom to the other.

Regiments, which had reached home only within the last twelve months, were again ordered to the coast for embarkation. Anticipations of glory glowed bright in many a bosom, which the disappointments experienced in the former campaign had failed to extinguish.

In fact, to an indifferent observer, the country might have seemed rather on the eve of a grand jubilee, than at the commencement of a fresh war. Yet, so it was—preparations went gaily on—trade appeared to thrive—and, though the country was fast being drained of its resources, no one seemed aware of any thing beyond the excitement of the present moment.

Together with many others, our regiment received orders for foreign service, and a fortnight was allotted for preparation; but, before the expiration of that period, I had the good fortune to obtain my promotion; and a majority in my old corps being at the time vacant, I was enabled to exchange—the more easily as both regiments were destined for the same duty: thus was accomplished, as far as my professional ambition was concerned, the object for which I had been so long striving. I had attained the much-coveted rank, and again joined the gallant old brigade.

A few nights prior to leaving England, I found myself lounging in the pit of the Opera.

It was the height of the season, and every place of public amusement teemed with representations illustrative of the anticipated accumulation of glory which it was confidently asserted must accrue to England by prosecuting the war.

The national enthusiasm was in its ascendancy—colours were given—yeomanry corps, suddenly seized with military mania, volunteered their services to mount guard over the market-places in their own country towns; while locks of hair—rings—lockets—and keepsakes innumerable---changed owners as if by magic. Balls were given — dinners eaten — speeches made—and wine drunk, until half the people were led to suppose that a splendid victory had already been achieved; whereas, we had not as yet set out in quest of conflict. But no matter, it pleased John Bull; and, amid the waving of scarfs—the tears of beauty—the flourish of trumpets — and the nodding of plumes, many a noble fellow, half fancying himself a hero, turned his back upon his home

for ever. In two short months what a contrast was presented between the gallant army that *then* took the field, and the handful of daring spirits who beheld the sun rise on the nineteenth of June!

But to return to the Opera. A wonderful piece of music had first been performed, intended as descriptive of the sounds peculiar to a field of battle; and, possibly, the imitation might have been extremely correct, and probably it was so; but, I am bound to confess, I never met with any thing, in reality, at all resembling what I that night heard at the King's Theatre, although I had previously imagined that every noise under the sun might have found a representative of its peculiar class at Vittoria; for, never before nor since, did I meet with such a concatenation of sounds as fell on my ear on that occasion. At the Opera, however, drums, cymbals, and trumpets, took the lead, and gallantly maintained their ascendancy throughout the evening: and the curtain fell amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the house, mingled with exclamations of delight.

I was passing through what is technically termed the crush room, when my eye caught the outline of a figure which immediately arrested my progress. It was the form of my cousin, beautiful as ever—yet there was a shade of pensive sadness across her brow, which, while it took from her that light, joyous look which, in former days, so bewitchingly lit up her features, left in its place so interesting an expression that I hardly knew which most to admire. She was leaning on the arm of another lady unknown to me, her father having probably descended the stairs in search of the carriage.

The recognition was mutual ; and, perceiving no symptom in her manner of a wish to avoid a meeting, I crossed to the part of the room where she and her friend were standing.

“If,” I commenced, “an old acquaintance might be permitted to recall to Miss Austin’s recollection the insignificant existence of her cousin, may I hope for one kind word before I again leave England?”

“Nay,” replied Mary, faintly smiling, “I

should have thought, from the very little anxiety you have evinced for the society of your relations, that the fact of *their* existence had been forgotten."

" You do not—you cannot think that, Mary;" I exclaimed: " God knows the many wretched hours I have passed since that dreadful day on which we parted. What could I do? Accused by my uncle of faults and crimes innumerable—opportunity of explanation refused me—how could I cringe for a reconciliation, when I saw the impracticability of success? but, even then, perchance, I might once more have ventured, had not you ranked yourself among my calumniators."

" I?" replied my cousin, emphatically, " never; my conduct towards you was adopted in conformity with my father's wish ; and, had you cared for a reconciliation with our family, did I not afford you opportunity of so doing? did I not write to you?"

" True," was my answer ; " true, Mary, you did write ; and many, many thanks, for the

generous kindness that prompted you to do so; but still I could not divest myself of the idea that you, even you, still held me culpable. Besides, what proofs could I adduce in vindication of my conduct, except my bare assertion, unsupported by other testimony! No, Mary, believe me when I say, and say truly, that, had I not supposed myself degraded in your estimation, nothing should have induced me to inflict so severe a punishment on myself as our prolonged estrangement has exemplified."

"I assure you," said the lovely girl, "that no one could have more regretted the misunderstanding that existed than I---I mean, than my father did; and often, and loudly, has he lamented that impetuosity of temper which led him rashly to credit all the exaggerated nonsense poured into his ear by Lord Mantar, instead of calmly and dispassionately weighing each circumstance before decision."

"Would to Heaven he had," I replied; "how many bitter hours might have thus been spared us!"

"Would that it had been so," echoed my cousin; "but you must make allowances for my dear father's irritable temper; and, remember, he had only just been undeceived respecting your supposed death. We had mourned for you, Harry---not with the outward semblance of woe only, but in deep and bitter anguish;" and her bright eyes filled with tears, at the recollection of the misery which her father ---could it have been *herself?*---had suffered. "Many a weary month elapsed," continued my cousin, "after the first rumour of your death, and every enquiry which was set on foot tended more fully to confirm the statement---our various and oft-repeated letters were unanswered. By the military authorities you were declared to have fallen at Vittoria; and, finally, your appointment in the regiment was filled by another person. How then could we doubt the story? by all it was firmly credited, and my poor father and myself were wretched." Oh, how I loved the dear girl for those words; the more, perhaps, from the sorrowful tone in which she

spoke them ; but, resuming her conversation, she continued : “ Firmly convinced of the impossibility of ever again beholding you on earth, judge with what mingled emotions we heard the tale of which Lord Mantar was the bearer ! Joy and amazement were the predominant feelings in my father’s breast, when the tidings first reached him ; but when he was told the story of the nun---your having connived at the circulation of the false report---and, finally, your long sojourn in London, and the cause of your delay there --- surely you cannot blame my kind parent if, when you appeared before him, his recollection teeming with the many grievances under which he fancied himself suffering at your hands---surely, Harry, some excuse may be found for his conduct.”

“ All---every excuse, dearest Mary,” I replied, with rather more energy than was absolutely necessary, considering the spot on which we stood—“ but how came my uncle to know about those unlucky bills ?”

“ Because, when presented for payment, the

agents, struck with the similarity of the hand-writing to yours, applied to my father for advice."

"Well, Mary," I resumed, "do you now believe me innocent of all those heinous charges?"

"Indeed I do, Harry;" replied my beautiful cousin.

"And the South Audley-street affair, too?" I enquired, taking the prettiest hand within my own that chance or fortune ever bestowed on woman, "do you acquit me of that also, Mary?"

"The termination of the unhappy affair," answered my cousin, blushing, "is a sufficient proof that Lord Mantar had his own reasons for wishing to cast the blame on any one rather than on himself."

"Dearest Mary," I ejaculated, not feeling quite as innocent as regarded my intentions in that affair as my cousin seemed willing to give me credit for—"but how have you reconciled the story of the nun? has that been explained away likewise?"

"As for that," answered my companion,

laughing, “had you not wholly withdrawn yourself from our society, you would have known that, for the last six weeks, my father and myself have been staying in Gloucestershire, where by accident we became acquainted with your nun ; and, from her lips, heard a very different version from Lord Mantar’s.”

My cousin then went on to inform me that the reason of my delay in London had been fully explained by Jephson ; whom, it may be remembered, I had deputed to settle with Crosstock for the money which, in the fullness of his heart, he so generously lent me. And moreover, she assured me that the only reason which prevented my uncle from seeking a renewal of our intimacy arose from a conviction in his mind that, by refusing to answer the letter which Mary had written, it was evidently my wish to avoid all further intercourse : thus it was made manifest that, but for my own consummate folly and false pride, I had for months rendered myself wholly wretched, whereas I might have enjoyed perfect happiness.

"There is one thing yet, Mary," I continued, "which to me remains incomprehensible—I allude to the locket which held the miniature of my mother, and which you wrote me I had sold for a trifling sum—but which locket, as Heaven is my witness, I have never seen since I lost it at Vittoria, when all I possessed was taken from me."

"I know not," replied my cousin, "further than that by mere accident, when in town with my father, I discovered it among a quantity of jewels which we were inspecting. The readiest conjecture as to how it came there was the possibility of its having been seized on the field, and, when brought back to England, by some one returning from the army, sold to the first jeweller who would purchase it; but when your existence was made known, the credit of having sold it was instantly awarded to yourself."

"I have much to thank my detractors for," was my answer; "but, on second thoughts, I think there is an easier way of accounting for its appearance at the jeweller's. But tell me, did the locket contain any picture?"

"None," was the reply.

"Then, trust me, Mary, the trinket was *not* that which I once possessed, but the duplicate of it, which I well remember to have seen when my mother gave me the one enclosing her likeness. And I have not the least doubt but, when Sir Frederick sold the whole of the trinkets and jewels which he could lay his hands on, the one which you mention was disposed of with the rest; and hence has arisen the mistake. But the chain, Mary," I continued, gazing earnestly on the one then round her fair neck, "was the chain with it?"

"Yes," was the reply; "and my father, of course, became the possessor."

"And did my cousin condescend to relieve him of it?" I added, smiling, still looking at the trinket, "for, unless I mistake, the one you now wear bears a great resemblance to that which we are speaking of."

"What, this?" instantly answered the lovely girl, not a little confused.

"Yes," was my answer, "*this*, Mary; and,

may I ask what is the prized and hidden ornament apparently affixed to it?"

"Oh—nothing." And, as if wearied with the conversation, my blushing companion turned her face towards the door, at the entrance of which appeared my old uncle, returning from his search after the carriage.

"What, Harry!" exclaimed the General, with his accustomed warmth, the instant he beheld me—"Thought you never meant to come near us again—eh, boy? cut old friends, Harry? eh, bad thing that;—but times are sadly altered since the ninety-four—never cut old friends, egad! I recollect two officers quarrelling on board the Rose—it was just two days after I lost my kit in the Bay of Port Royal—you never heard that, perhaps, did you?"

"I shall be delighted to hear it, my dear uncle, at any other time," was my answer; "but surely you would not keep my cousin Mary standing here, when every person except ourselves, has left the room?"

"Right, boy, right," replied the General; "make sail then, you take Mary, come—"

I did not require a second bidding to do so; so, drawing my gentle cousin's arm within my own, we descended the staircase.

"Harry!" exclaimed my uncle, as I was preparing to take leave—"why don't you jump in? Don't you mean to go home with us? eh, where are you living?"

"I intended to sleep at Steven's," was my reply.

"Sleep at Steven's?" peevishly echoed the old gentleman—"sleep at Steven's, nonsense boy, nonsense; Sir John Jervis never slept at Steven's—but come, jump in, and I'll give you the story of General Collet evacuating Guadaloupe."

Willingly would I have listened for ever, provided my fair cousin joined in the labour; therefore, obeying my worthy relative's commands, I sprung into the vacant seat, and we were soon seated at the General's supper table.

To an uninterested person, a repetition of that night's conversation must prove dull and insipid; but to ourselves such was far from being

the case. Many were the questions put, and answers given, by all parties—and more than once was I compelled to relate each particular of my adventures.

That was a happy night. The hours passed as minutes, I was in the society of the only woman for whom I had ever felt a kindlier feeling than regard; and loving her as I did, with the all-absorbing devotedness of a first and pure affection, the bliss I that evening enjoyed in the conviction that in return I was myself beloved was ecstacy indeed.

The grey morning light, breaking its way through the crevices of the window shutters, found us still seated at the hospitable board; and with as much eagerness as ever listening to the many-to-be detailed occurrences since our parting; but the time was fast approaching when it was imperatively necessary I should tear myself away; and, now that I had found the happiness attendant on my cousin's society, I was unavoidably compelled to quit her for another, and perhaps last, campaign.

In two or three days we were to commence our march ; and, now that fortune seemed determined to make amends for all the miseries she had hitherto inflicted upon me, the hopes which I had begun to cherish were suddenly cast down, and the necessity of leaving those I cared for was made plainly visible to my understanding.

Much as I have let my kind readers into the secrets of my own thoughts and actions up to this period, I cannot carry my complaisance so far as to make them acquainted with a minute detail of all that happened when, for a few minutes, my lovely cousin and myself were alone on the evening preceding my departure.

Those who have been placed in such a position need no explanation—and those who never have been so circumstanced would not understand me, were I to attempt one.

One point, however, was agreed on by all, and that was my marriage ; but the General declared the impossibility of giving his consent until after my return from abroad, when his

sanction to our union should no longer be withheld. With this assurance I was compelled to rest satisfied—inwardly praying that the campaign might not last an hour.

“Now, God bless you, Harry,” said the old General as I passed from his threshold, “remember, my boy, you’re a young soldier yet. That affair of yours at Vittoria was a very pretty little skirmish; but you must bear in mind, my boy, that as yet you’ve seen nothing like Guadaloupe in ninety-four—those were the days, Harry—there we had Sir Charles Grey, Sir John Jervis—Dundas and Collet. Egad, my boy, you should have seen my kit go over, in the Bay of Port Royal—there we were—the Quebec—the Blanche—the Rose—the Ceres—” and God knows how many more he would have recounted, had not I, feeling little disposed to laugh at his failing, wrung his hand with an affectionate grasp, and, rushing down the steps, turned from his sight.

Merrily the trumpets rung out their spirit-stirring sounds the following morning, as our

regiment filed along the road, and a more splendid body of men never existed. It was a beautiful day ; and the bright arms gleaming in the sun, together with the gorgeous trappings of the chargers and the handsome appointments of the gallant Hussars might well have awakened feelings of admiration in any breast : but when the lookers on knew, that in all probability, in a short—short space of time, many of those noble fellows would lie cold and senseless in the dust, the interest which was consequently excited became ten-fold.

Alas, how truly were such predictions verified ! many a brave spirit breathed forth its last sigh ere even time had dimmed the brightness of the glittering panoply. How many remain at this distant period numbered on the strength of my old and much loved corps ? How many of my old companions still adorn those ranks ? None—no, not one—all—all have gone. My kind hearted old Colonel, and the liquor-loving Adjutant, who first initiated Lord Mantar into the mysteries of still-hunting—have each paid

that last debt which at no distant day must be claimed at the hands of all. Vainly may you now seek the jovial countenance of the standard-drinking Major—the punch-making doctor no more shall circulate those oceans of liquid which, concocted under his auspices, partook in flavour of the nectar of the Gods. The auto-do-fé apron has long ceased to excite astonishment among the uninitiated at the well supplied banquet. These, and many more, now cumber not the earth ; and even the facetious sayings and pithy jokes with which it was their wont to season the convivial meal have passed and are forgotten. Others have sprung up since *their* day, who, in their turn, must sink into oblivion.

Some of our old friends, however, are still spared. Charley Villiers is now a General officer, and can step into a hack cab with the greatest composure ; and has, in fact, become so totally wreckless of appearances as actually to have driven up to the door of the United Service club, a few days since, in one of those obnoxious conveyances. Whether his aversion for the

grandsire of all carriages—a hackney coach—still exists, it is impossible to say, since that venerable, ancient vehicle has, together with its charioteer, fallen into the “sear and yellow leaf.”

Sir Terence O'd'Armagh has long since retired to his estate in Ireland, where, after the practice of the Emperor of China, by means of a four-pounder on his terrace, he proclaims, far and wide, the period at which he is fed—with this difference only—that the afore-named Emperor bangs his gong, to let the world know that he *has* dined, while the hospitable Baronet fires his gun to intimate to all around that he is *going* to dine—the explosion being understood as an invitation to all those who may feel inclined to partake of his banquet.

Where Hedak is I know not—possibly still in the Brighton watch-house, for want of bail; or what is equally likely, seated on the throne in his own country; or, what is still more probable, peaceably reclining underneath the sod—his body in one place, and his head in another.

The gentleman with the mortar face, I rejoice to say, enjoys the ease and dignity attached to the arduous duties devolving upon all those who undertake the functions of an Alderman in his native city.

Mr. Lowerd, the Attorney, has long since been hung, and his tall thin friend is a ranter in Carlisle. Jephson, my steady conscientious lawyer, still flourishes—but the brown horse and yellow gig are seen no more; yet he still continues to drive about as gaily as ever—he has retired from business; and long may he enjoy the fruits of his honest industry.

I fear, I cannot say as much for the irritable Captain whom we suspended at Deal—but he is gone—and be it remembered, “*de mortuis nil nisi bonum;*” Sergeant Hinde, however, the trusty Sergeant Hinde, still flourishes under the fostering care of the Ordnance, by the appellation of a Barrack Sergeant; and many are the strange tales he can relate, when serving out the blankets to a regiment newly arrived within his precincts.

Emma Morton has long since resigned her slate of single blessedness ; her beauty is as attractive as ever, and her sprightly conversation may be enjoyed at one part of the year in the county Down ; and during the remainder in Berkshire, or Town. Her brother remains in ignorance on the subject of the violencello ; and his servant continues to insist that it *was* put on board. It is a source of dispute which neither of them like to agitate ; for it is one on which they cannot agree. The master has long since retired from the king's service ; while the servant, being of opinion that it was highly advantageous for *him*—to remain in *his*—still wanders about with him, each in a state of single blessedness—and finds that a difference of opinion is highly objectionable to both.

X. Y. Z. yet advertises for all unfortunates he can catch ; and I much fear Captain Daillie has given up his suite of rooms at Steven's and somewhat diminished the number of his stud. "Things can't last for ever," and, to use Mr. Grabum's words—"Your life dont seem all, a

round of pleasure, as the sand-seller's ass said to the horse in the cider mill."

Doña Agnes still resides in Gloucestershire, admired and beloved by all who know her. And it was but last year, at the special invitation of her husband, Don Raineous Julian Deogracias Ildefonso, followed by three huge - whiskered offspring, took courage—then took shipping—and, having taken up their abode for some months with their white - featured relative—finally took leave—and again retired to Soria, much wondering at the many and embarrassing adventures which, when in England, they were continually involved in—and had not the pallid gentleman assured them he had no hand or part whatever in bringing about these misfortunes, I should have fixed upon him as the cause.

Theophilus Burslem lives on South Sea common, and has been so fortunate as to persuade a most amiable lady to share his prosperity and his abode. But here again have I wandered from my path, when I ought long since to have been at Waterloo.

I shall not be far wrong in asserting that there exists not in the United Kingdom, man, woman, or child, who has not either seen pictures or panoramas of Waterloo, heard songs on Waterloo, read books on Waterloo, talked for weeks about Waterloo, and full two-thirds of the adult population could not rest until they journeyed forth to have a look at Waterloo.

If such is the case, my readers cannot be anxious for a repetition at my hands—but if such be *not* the case, I would then refer them to any of the many accounts published, each of which must prove better than what I could afford, for reasons already detailed on that subject. Yet, for the benefit of those who may still evince interest in the matter, I can assert that I did *not* dance at the Dutchesse of Richmond's ball, for I was not there; but it is equally true that I *did* dance on the Brussels road the following Sunday, when my horse was killed, and a gentleman endeavoured to divide the arteries of my right arm from the flesh, with a pole about eight feet long, having a spear

affixed thereto ; and it is equally worthy of credit that, being reported unfit for present service, on account of my wound, I fully coincided in the view which the doctors took of my case, and, fearful that they might alter their opinion, forthwith applied for leave.

If we had been looked upon as heroes before the fight, Heaven knows what they thought of us afterwards. Every drummer was viewed as an Alexander ; and to have been at Waterloo was tantamount to proclaiming yourself a wild beast. Half the town instantly flocked to behold you. Waterloo ! Waterloo ! nothing was heard but Waterloo ! Heaven help the poor deluded mortals. Waterloo was but child's play, compared with the marches—sieges—battles—cold—starvation—and almost nudity, that our gallant army suffered for months together in the Peninsula : and then the medal—'tis a sore subject—but Mary said mine was a beautiful one, and consequently I have prized it ever since.

Amid all the excitement which appeared to

have driven the members of the sober-minded nation of shop-keepers mad, it is not to be supposed that the old General and my cousin were exempt from the prevailing epidemic—far from it—as every one was running about, they must needs do likewise; and so anxious was the ancient gentleman to ascertain, from my statements, whether there was any resemblance between Guadaloupe and Waterloo, that he hastened off to meet me on the way. And a happier trio than my uncle, Mary, and myself, could not have assembled together.

Once more did the Veteran officer fish up his clothes from the bottom of the bay of Port Royal, and willingly I lent my aid to sink them afterwards, so that they might be all ready for the amusement of my uncle's next victim. I have often tried to recollect what subjects we conversed on that evening, but, for the life of me, I cannot succeed. The General, however, has since said that he never found me so attentive a listener before. As for Mary, my own dear, beautiful Mary, I know she did not say

much, yet we were happy—aye exquisitely happy. But one circumstance I do recollect—for when the General fixed the day on which the wedding was to take place, provided I could obtain my cousin's consent, I perfectly recollect experiencing some little trouble in obtaining her sanction — but, when her decision was pronounced, it certainly did not sound like—"No."

## CHAPTER XIV.

ON the afternoon preceding the day of my marriage, I was ruminating over the complex mysteries of a special license spread out at full length on the table before me, when my servant, entering the apartment, stated that a person was below anxious to see me.

"Who is he?" I enquired.

"Dont know exactly, sir," was the reply, "but he looks to me like an officer."

"An officer," thought I, "my pale-faced friend, for a hundred, for both himself and his wife promised to come up for the wedding—so without further cogitation, down stairs I rushed, and there found an officer, 'tis true, but one

from the precincts of Bow-street, in the person of my former acquaintance, Mr. Grabum.

"Glad to see you, sir, as the spider said to the fly, when he catched him," commenced my visitor.

"Mr. Grabum!" I exclaimed, in astonishment, "may I ask to what circumstance I am indebted for the honour of this visit—no more duels to be frustrated to day, surely?"

"I should rather think not, as the goose said when the fox asked him to supper," replied the witty constable; "but the fact is, sir, I'm come on a small matter of business, and, saving your presence, what I've got to communicate aint so much amiss, neither, as the man said when he married the old woman."

Curious to hear what particular subject of interest could exist in common between us, I requested the possessor of the neckcloth to walk up stairs, which he accordingly did, where having refreshed himself with copious draughts of a mahogany-coloured liquid, which we extracted for his particular amusement out

of a small square box, having the words "spirit case," stamped on the top, by degrees the following information was extracted.

"Times is changed, as Lord Ferrers said when they hanged him," commenced my acquaintance, "very much changed, since last I had the honour of seeing your honour, but what signifies that, says you—it ai'nt neither here nor there."

To this, I of course yielded my full and unqualified assent, when Mr. Grabum continued :

"Perhaps you may remember setting the beaks abroad, sir, after one Jackson, a cretur of infinite merit, as the play-acter said of his harlequin."

"Jackson! indeed do I, Mr. Grabum," I exclaimed instantly, "have you found him?"

"We fancied we had—but we ar'nt," was the unsatisfactory answer : "the fact is, Major, all is'nt gold as glisters, as the chap thought when he passed the bad guinea ; so, notwithstanding we had every reason to suppose our information good, yet when we comed to the crib, he was

gone, as Mother Hubbard's dog said, when he looked for a bone in the cupboard. Now you see, sir, as how we could'n't help that, seeing we should have been as glad to have nabbed him as any one would have been, 'cause why? why, cause there's lots of rewards offered for him; and we'd as soon have it ourselves as let another have it; but 'twas no go—howsomedever he's gone, and I don't much reckon he'll turn up again, as the young 'oman said when she buried the old man fourteen foot deep with his head downwards."

"Do you think he 's left the country, Grabum?" I enquired.

"Why not?" responded the officer, "as the judge said when the murderer asked if he was to be dissected. For my part," laying his forefinger in a most knowing way along the side of his nose—"I've a shrew'd suspicion that he's cut his stick."

"Well, Grabum," I replied, "of course you understand these things better than I do, and consequently must be the best judge, if, as you

surmise, the wretch has escaped, we must leave him to God and his conscience."

"God and my country, please your honour," interrupted my guest. "God and my country, sir, is what they says at the Old Bailie, they ar'nt got nothing at all about conscience there; sir, I've been in and out a million times, and never met it once, sir."

"I beg your pardon, Grabum," was my answer, "I dare say you are right."

"Dare say, sir," angrily he replied, "rather quite sure, sir, as the hunchback said when the bone choked him."

"Well then, *quite* sure, Mr. Grabum: but tell me, did you find any person at the place where you had been informed Jackson might be apprehended?"

"Yes, sir, there was a poor misfortunate female cretur, in the last gasp, sir."

"When were you there, Grabum?" I eagerly asked.

"This morning, sir—and, not finding the old one, I turned to, and got as much as I could

out of the young un, as the boy said when he milked the kid ; and by all as I could collect it seemed as if this poor dying cretur was his daughter, but, as I had'nt got no warrant against her, I seed no fun in touching her, as the skinned cat said to the porcupine, so I let her alone as she was."

No doubt remained on my mind but the unfortunate sufferer whom Grabum thus described was my former deliverer Jane—she whom I had once seen in the abominable corridor, and twice met at the shrubbery of the Druid Oak ; and my imagination quickly identified her as the wretched sacrifice to the unparalleled brutality of Sir Frederick Distowe, and the daughter of that miserable man against whose life every arm seemed raised.

I was resolved to satisfy myself on this point, and, having inquired of Grabum, whether he could take me to the place where the unfortunate girl might be found, he willingly professed his readiness to escort me thither. A hackney-coach was put in requisition, and together we proceeded on our way.

The direction we took was towards the Eastern extremity of the suburbs, where having left the vehicle, Grabum preceded me through innumerable courts and passages, some of which I could not help imagining were not altogether unknown to me. After threading our road down lanes half-choked up with filth and crowds of squalid, disgusting looking children, we at length reached a low door, one hinge of which having falling off, moved to and fro with a melancholy noise as each gust of wind disturbed its equilibrium—a broken stair-case, whose bannisters apparently had long since departed, next met the eye. This dangerous method of ascending to the higher part of the building wound its narrow and broken fragments to a considerable elevation ; and at each landing-place, rooms, some with and some without doors, branched off in all directions, yet none appeared as if inhabited. The very walls were green with damp and incrusted with filth ; not a pane of glass shone in the window-frames, and here and there an old rag or a decayed piece of garment

was the only thing which bore testimony to the building's ever having been inhabited. Cautiously we ascended the greasy tottering steps, and it was not until the summit had been attained that my guide informed me our destination had been arrived at ; and, pushing open an unfastened door, I stood within the same den which, by compulsion, I occupied the first night of my arrival in London, when a boy I came up from Eton.

The few broken panes of glass which formerly adhered to the one solitary window had long since lost their hold ; and the chill air of the evening found free and undisturbed access through the unprotected apertures. Neither chair nor table was in the room—bed there was none—but the identical dirty sacks heaped in a corner of the apartment, plainly denoted the couch whereon I rested, when last a sojourner in that abode.

Desolation the most abject appeared to have there taken up her abode ; and it was not until a faint groan struck my ear that the possibility

of a human creature's existing in such wretchedness occurred to my mind, nevertheless so it was, and the picture of heart-rending misery which I then beheld must remain engraved upon my memory for ever.

Stretched upon the revolting mass of filthy rags which composed her pallet—her long black hair falling in neglected wildness down the shrivelled arms and across the bosom of the dying girl—lay the sad vestige of the once beautiful Jane. Gone was the lustre of her full dark eye—her lips were livid as the dead—the cheeks sunk through disease and famine, and all that was once fascinating and lovely now lay a loathsome mass before my sight. The small delicate fingers, however, still retained their pristine whiteness, but the nails cramped up within the palms of her hand, and its feeble grasp clutching at vacancy, plainly told the agony under which the poor sufferer laboured.

My first care was to despatch Grabum for a physician and some nourishment, but, alas, both were needless! The power of the doctor could

not turn aside the will of God, and the hour when food might have sustained the body had passed away—she was evidently dying, and *that* death aggravated by the remembrance of crime, and the horror of her present destitution and pain.

Silently I stood by the revolting couch of the penitent—and uncontrolled I felt the hot tears coursing each other rapidly down my cheeks. I thought on her as the once joyous being—the beloved of her parents—the idol of her friends. I pictured to myself what an inestimable blessing she must have been when, happy in contentment and the love of each other, her doating parents would clasp their only child to their bosoms, and, invoking all the blessings of heaven on her head, humbly intreat the Father of all good that she might prove a comfort and support to them through life.

The view now changed—I imagined I could trace the maddening accents of despair as, lured by the winning sophistry of the tempter—the father of this happy family plunged into the

vortex of play—the rattle of the accursed dice—the shriek of anguish, as he beheld his last shilling pass into the hands of others, rung through my brain.

Anon the scene assumed a different shape—the dupe pined within the solid boundaries of a prison, while the tempter stalked abroad at large. But where were the wife and her fondly loved child? No shelter remained to shield them from the cold night blast—no crust of bread to allay the cravings of hunger—no friend to extend to them the poor support they now so much needed—they were outcasts and beggars.

With false protestations and vows, the arch fiend again appeared, and amid his blasphemous professions of virtuous intentions, which he called upon his God to witness, he accomplished his infernal ends; and the wretched husband came forth from his prison walls, having mentally offered up his immortal soul hereafter for the gratification of earthly revenge.

And, thought I, is it possible that the poor attenuated form before me can indeed be the

same creature whom a few years since I beheld, wretched it is true, but beautiful, most beautiful in form ! For what purpose this child of suffering had been born, mortal dare not presume to question—the ways of God are inscrutable.

Between the paroxysms of pain which were fast drawing her towards the grave, she fixed her large dark eyes on my countenance, and, fully conscious of all that was passing around, motioned me to kneel by her side, for so low and indistinct was her utterance that with difficulty I could catch her words.

“This is kind of you,” she said, in broken sentences—“very kind—I wished to see you—before I died—for no one else will care for this wretched frame being laid within—the grave.—Oh God ! is there no pardon for crime like mine ? Is there no help—hereafter ?” and, shuddering with horror, she violently pressed her clenched hands before her eyes, as if endeavouring to shut out the phantoms which her imagination had created.

It was a soul-harrowing sight, but, as far as laid in my power, I offered what consolation I was capable of.

" You mean well," said the heart-broken girl, " but you do not—cannot—know—half my guilt. Perchance you look upon me as one—lost to honour—virtue and all good here ;—if so, you judge rightly—but I cannot die without disclosing my worst—my blighting crime—which weighs me down—and bids me look for pardon—never :—closer," she exclaimed, as her breath came thick and faintly from her chest, " my eyes grow dim—my time is short here—but what an age of suffering—it has been—listen—you know the history of—my shame—the author of my ruin—but you know not the consequences of the crime. To escape detection—murder was added to—the rest—and my child, my poor child perished—by—my—hands. Oh, God !" she exclaimed, raising her almost transparent arms to Heaven, " if earthly suffering can atone for earthly crime—receive—my—penitent—soul—into thy hea—ven—ly—

king——” The last syllable died upon her lips, slowly her hand sunk down by her side—and the soul of the poor heart-broken girl winged its flight to Him who gave it.

“All this comes of PLAY, as the child said when his brother poked his eye out with a needle,” growled Mr. Grabum, as, turning down the stair-case, with an aching heart I passed from the abode of misery and death.

THE END.











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